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ABSTRACT

Articles and essays in this journal issue focus on explaining ethnographic (observation taking into account socioeconomic and cultural factors) research procedures and showing how this methodology can be applied to English classes and reported in ways useful to teachers. The first article, by Paul Diesing, provides background on ethnography. The second article, by Miles Myers, shows how the ethnographic mode of inquiry can be used in English classrooms to describe daily teaching routines, while Sondra Perl's article next after this cites connections between the ethnographic process and the composing process. In the fourth and fifth articles, Rita Pollard shows how ethnographic research gives insight into composing habits of grade school writers, and Cheryl Amand explores the ties between the classroom context and the whole school-community environments. The sixth article, by H. William Burns, discusses how teachers and students can be ethnographers. The last two articles, by Marie Wilson Nelson and Robbie W. Strickland, explore how ethnography can teach researchers about roles in teacher-student interaction. A book review by Rita Pollard completes the issue. (HTH)

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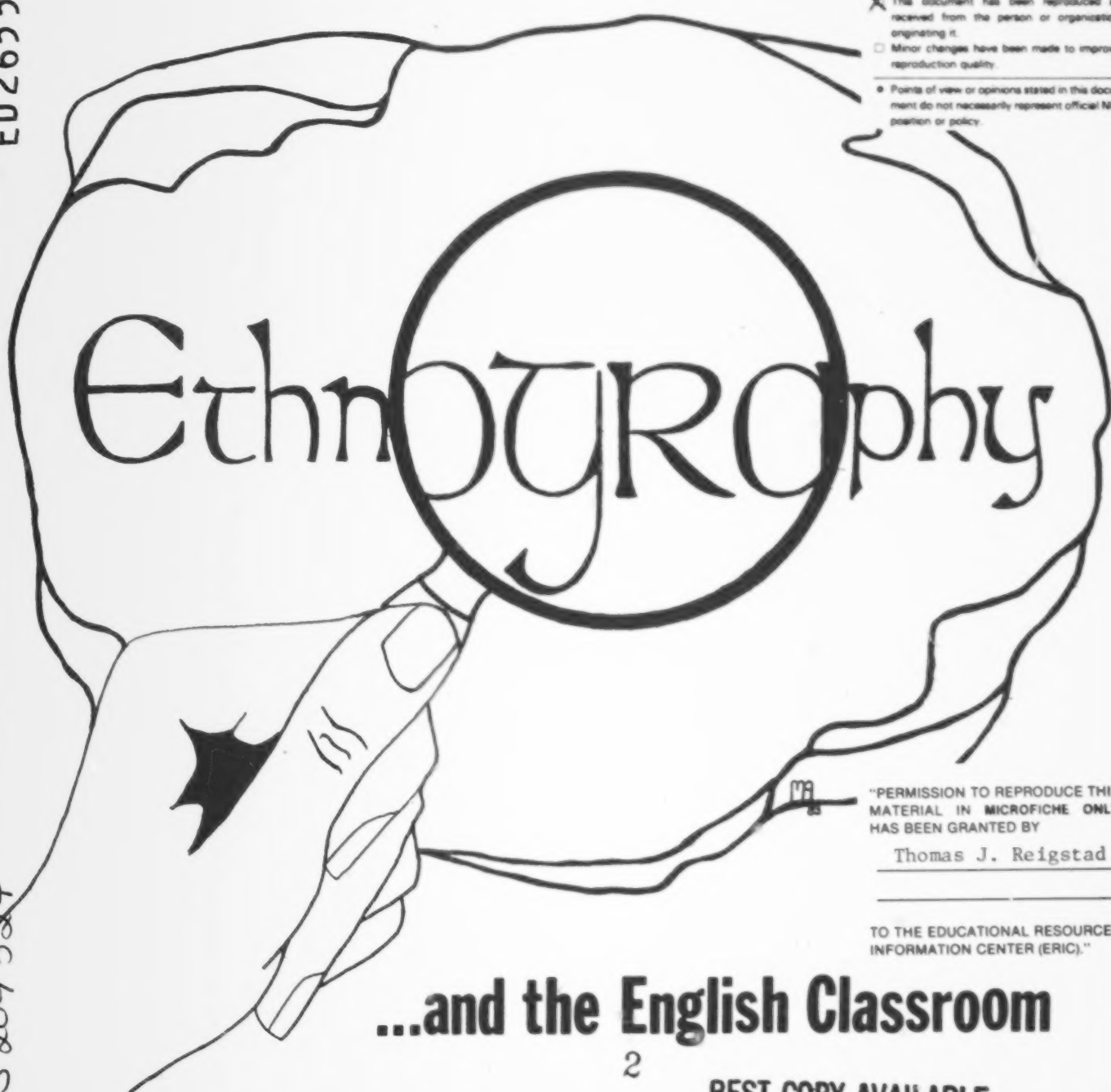
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MANUSCRIPTS will ordinarily be screened, and the authors notified, within six weeks.

From the Editor's Desk

Early in the winter of 1979, I was kicking around an idea to study how professional writers teach college writers through one-to-one tutorials. I hoped to visit ten such writer-teachers, sit in on and tape record their individualized teaching sessions, collect student papers that formed the basis of each conference, and interview writer-teachers and students on their perceptions of the tutorial interactions. When I was still in the planning stages of the project, I heard Paul Diesing speak at SUNY at Buffalo about ethnography. His talk about how ethnographers adopt a receptive role, collect many types of data, test multiple theories, ask other observers for their reactions, and then reconstruct patterns that emerge from the data was a revelation and spurred me on to conduct my study.

Diesing's talk taught me that there is a science that would give structure to my investigation. I soon devoured Diesing's book, *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences*, finding more tips on how to describe results of participant-observer research. As my own interest in ethnography has grown each year since then, I have noticed a corresponding rise in references to ethnography in recent research in English instruction.

Inevitably, when a concept makes the leap from its home area of knowledge (in this case, anthropology) to another field (English education, for example), the concept can become a slightly misused, fashionable "buzz word" in its enthusiastic acceptance. I sensed this possibility when I attended an English teacher's convention a couple years ago and witnessed several panel sessions that included "ethnography" in their titles but bore little resemblance to the rigors of ethnographic methodology as I understood it. At the same convention I heard the out-going editor of *Research in the Teaching of English* complain about how difficult it is for researchers to report within the space constraints of a journal article results of naturalistic, ethnographic studies. It was then that the idea for this theme issue was spawned.

My objective is to help explain ethnographic research procedures and to show how this

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Artwork by Monica Albrecht
Student, Villa Maria College of Buffalo

methodology can be applied to English classes and reported in ways useful to teachers. Not surprisingly, I invited Paul Diesing to supply the lead background article on ethnography. Sondra Perl cites fascinating connections between the ethnographic process and the composing process. Other articles in this collection demonstrate how the ethnographic mode of inquiry can be used in English classrooms to describe daily teaching routines (Miles Myers), to give insight into composing habits of grade school writers (Rita Pollard), to teach us about roles in teacher-student interaction (Robbie Strickland and Marie Wilson Nelson), to show how teachers and students can be ethnographers (H. William Burns), and to remind us of the ties between the classroom context and the whole school-community en-

vironments (Cheryl Amand).

The ethnographer's fascination with the mundane, the every-day, can inform teachers in at least two ways: it can validate, confirm, certify what we only assume to be the case about what we do; and it can allow us to perceive those instructional episodes from the inside and from the outside that seem to be successful and those that seem to need changing. Furthermore, the multiple kinds of data that ethnographers collect — documents, theories, interviews, observations — and the careful mapping out of their hunches about patterns of behavior strike me as ideals for English teachers serious about making significant discoveries in their profession.

— Thomas J. Reigstad

Ethnography

Ethnography is one of several methods of studying human behavior by direct observation in a natural setting. It was originally developed by anthropologists to study the culture of a small preliterate society. Since the society was preliterate there were no writings to study and one had to rely on informants and one's own observation. Since the society was small, several hundred or several thousand people, one could observe most or all of the society during a stay of a year or two.

The method was readily extended to larger societies; one merely selected a small unit of the society, a village or a neighborhood, and studied it. Or one could select a small sample of localities — a traditional village, a neighborhood in a modern port city, an upper class family, and a group of traveling merchants, to put together a picture of the common culture and the variations. If the society was literate, one could simply add a sample of the writings to one's data base.

As a result the method was seen to be applicable to any part of the world. One could study village life in India or Austria, or a town in New England, or an ethnic neighborhood in Boston. Or one could study a factory or hospital or medical school or laboratory or office, since these are communities of a sort. One could even study a classroom.

In all these cases the subject-matter was the culture of the group or community: the beliefs, practices, tools, techniques, ceremonies and rituals, daily schedules, that all or most people shared. At the same time a parallel method of direct observation of the individual was being developed, primarily by psychoanalysts but also by other psychologists such as Piaget and Murray. The two methods were readily com-

bined; ethnographers learned to give personality tests like Murray's TAT and to take down life histories and dreams; psychologists learned to study family and small group culture as a setting for understanding individuals. Thus the study of culture was enriched by adding a life history dimension and seeing how individuals put together culture elements in their personality, and the study of personality was enriched by understanding the sociocultural setting that presented development problems and facilities for individuals.

Ethnography in the classroom can take either focus, the culture or the individual. One can study the shared understandings, tools, techniques, roles and expectations, ceremonies, schedules, but also see how these elements combine or conflict in the socialized individual's behavior patterns. Or one can study an individual making her way through the field of techniques and understandings, adapting some and rejecting others, or struggling unsuccessfully to integrate conflicting demands.

In both cases the aim of ethnography is to understand the individual in its historical uniqueness, either the individual culture or the individual person or subgroup. This aim contrasts with the generalizing aim of some scientific methods, the aim of discovering universal laws or regularities. To be sure, we understand the individual in part by comparison that brings out the general and typical as well as the unique; and we understand laws better when we see how they combine in individual cases.

An ethnographic study begins not in the field but in the library. Others must have studied either this community or similar communities, and one begins by reading their reports. These reports give one a general picture of the community and tell one what to expect, what to look for, and where to look. The reports are necessarily somewhat false since the community must have changed since it was observed before, or the similar com-

munity must be different in some ways. If the previous observers are available one can interview them to get their anecdotes, half-formed insights and hunches, their glosses and background material on their reports. Sometimes an impromptu anecdotal account can give a livelier feel of daily life than a carefully polished written report.

It is also essential to learn the language of one's prospective community in advance. Some early anthropologists depended on translators and informants, but this interposed a personal barrier between the ethnographer and his community. The report gave the interpreter's or informant's view of the community, or rather the view that the informant believed this stranger should properly have. This point applies also to specialized languages: if one is studying a biology laboratory or a radio astronomy observatory or a community of geologists one must know the terms and concepts by which these people communicate.

Finally if this is a literate community one must read its principal writings in advance where possible. A student of some scientific community must know the theories and publications and controversies that provide the setting for scientific work. A student of a religious community should know the sacred writings; a student of a corporation should read the stockholders' reports. Of course many other writings become accessible only during the study and may form an important part of the data base.

Adequate advance preparation allows one to enter the community as already something of an insider, knowing what to expect and how to talk and act. This cuts out the long, awkward and annoying period of being a stranger and being a newcomer, trying the patience of one's hosts.

Next it is necessary to get access. A newcomer to a community is always assigned some role as a basis for communication, and one's initial role is important for the quality

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He is the author of Reason in Society: Five Types of Decisions and Their Social Conditions and of Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences.

of data that become available. Assignment to the wrong role can cripple or ruin a whole study. Suppose, for example, that one is seen as a spy for management, or as a friend of the opposing faction; that would close off access immediately. In such cases it may be advisable to reject the role and try to redefine it, or to withdraw and start over again. Conversely, access to some central location in the community, the bowling team or lunch table or personnel office, can make important data available rapidly.

The nature of the initial role depends mainly on who provides the introduction to the community. If top management provides the introduction: "I want you to co-operate with this investigator" that tends to define one role; a new secretary at a desk has a different role. Nevertheless, the ethnographer often has little choice and must accept the role that is available, trying to redefine or supplement it later if necessary.

The first stage of observation is a passive one: the new observer blends into the background and listens quietly. The effect of passivity is to allow the normal routines of the community to re-establish themselves after the disruption created by a newcomer. Proper advance preparation helps the newcomer to become inobtrusive by doing and saying the proper things.

Passivity also has the effect of clearing away the observer's expectations and preconceptions, and allowing the host community's activities and feelings to take over one's consciousness. This is an inward receptivity in which one becomes a part of the situation rather than an outside observer. It may involve observing everything with free floating attention, waiting to be impressed by something, as Freud describes the process, or it may involve vigorous participation in an ongoing activity.

This sort of receptiveness requires a certain sort of introjective or "feminine" personality, or at least a person who has accepted his own feminine side, and some people will not be able to do it. A person who has a need to be in control or at least to "know" what is going on, or a person who has a need to be at the center of activity or at least to be noticed, will not make a good ethnographer. Even if such a person goes through the motions of being unobtrusive, he will be actively projecting his own categories and expectations into the situation to make sense of it, rather than absorbing the categories and expectations of his hosts. People who need to be in control should use some

other method, formal questionnaires or experimentation, and they will find these methods more congenial and scientifically satisfying.

"The ideal ethnographer should have the right balance of receptivity and skepticism, involvement and detachment."

Once the observer is settled in some location and daily life is continuing, she will find various sorts of data coming in. There may be direct experience by participation in some ongoing activity, observation, and comments or explanations. The kind of data that come in depend on the community and on the location of the observer. As time passes and the ethnographer gets more active, she initiates the collection of other kinds of data: questioning people or even interviewing them, reading inside documents, mapping spatial locations and the flow of activities through them, administering psychological tests, setting up informants in other locations and questioning them regularly. It is characteristic of ethnography (and of clinical psychology) to depend on multiple types of data and to adapt data collecting to the situation. In the last fifteen to twenty years the value of having multiple types of data has come to be appreciated in some other methods, especially in survey research, and these methods have been modified accordingly.

It is important to record data every day soon after they come in, but not during the activity. Obviously the appearance of pencil and notebook during a ceremony or informal discussion would disturb the atmosphere and change the data, so the ethnographer has to remember and write it down afterwards, in a break or at the end of the day. Many ethnographers also keep a diary or journal which lists the day's sequence of activities and records casual encounters and odd happenings. Sometimes these happenings are trivial, but sometimes they take on significance much later when the ethnographer has developed a better understanding.

As data come in the observer's free-floating attention will be caught by recurring themes: something that has happened before will recur in a different context, or the same comment will be made by several people. Observers chatting with incoming medical students may

notice how serious they are, or a reading of personnel records may reveal that top managers are all Protestants, or the bowler-observer may notice that one person usually wins the game. Sometimes there may be a persistent contrast with an earlier report of the same community or a similar community: the earlier report tells of harmonious relations, but the observer sees conflict.

The themes gradually connect with each other in a growing pattern or picture. By themselves they are simply puzzling: why does this person keep winning, or what happens to Catholic or Jewish managers? But when the themes fall into a pattern they start to make sense. The person who usually wins is the group leader, and beating him is a challenge to his leadership; he leads because he expresses certain desired attitudes; bowling is a kind of ritual expressing group cohesion, and so on. The conflicts are usually between certain male relatives; they occur in the evening in taverns, where drink has loosened the normal injunction against relatives quarreling; the subject is usually property rights and obligations; the culture is ambiguous about these obligations; and so on. That is, the theme is explained by its connections to other themes. This is known as explanation by pattern (Kaplan, 1964, chapter 9, section 38). The ethnographer gradually puts together a number of these tentative patterns, hoping to eventually combine them into a single account of the community.

Testing occurs during the process of pattern formation, not after it. First, data are tested against other kinds of data. An informant's account of an activity can be compared with direct observation or participation in the activity, and with the written report or the written instructions, or even with a videotape of the activity. Two informants can be compared with each other over a range of subjects, and two ethnographers can compare their observations made from different locations.

The reason for having multiple types of data is that there are no infallible data in ethnography, nor anywhere in the social sciences. Observations are always in part projections of what we expect or would like to see. Informants' statements are self-serving and project their attitudes toward the other people involved. Official records and reports are interpretations which idealize or focus on salient problems or achievements. Personnel records, and all records, can be changed. I once had my students participate in a demonstration and write a report of it, in-

cluding an exact count of the demonstrators. The numbers reported were 25,30,35,50,55, and 60.

When two or three kinds of data agree they increase each others' plausibility; when other data consistently agree with an informant's statements they increase the informant's plausibility, and so on. But when data disagree they are not necessarily wrong; the disagreement may itself take on a consistent pattern reflecting different spatial locations or roles or expectations or ideologies or personalities. For example the ethnographer who found harmonious relations liked to retire early, while the quarrels between male relatives occurred late at night. Of course this pattern itself must then be tested against other media.

A theme is tested by seeing whether it recurs in new instances or new locations. If students being interviewed express an attitude of seriousness, one checks whether additional students express the same attitude, and whether the attitude appears in other circumstances, locations, or times. This may involve counting the positive and negative instances. A few negative instances are enough to reject a proposed theme or to restrict its scope or at least to call for changes in it. Counting is an especially important testing technique because we tend to construct a theme out of a few instances and thereafter notice the positive instances and ignore or forget or revise the negative instances, tricking ourselves into believing we have seen a regular occurrence. A count exposes the trickery.

A pattern is tested by attempting to rearrange its parts into a different pattern, and then searching for evidence to support the alternative pattern. Any such evidence constitutes negative evidence for the first pattern. The evidence is negative even if it can be fit into both patterns, because the double fit shows that the first pattern is not the unique way to arrange the component themes. An alternative pattern may be suggested by negative instances of themes, or it may be suggested by published research on similar cases, or by informants' interpretations.

Testing of alternative patterns may involve very active probing and searching for evidence that will support one but not the other. Such activity is very different from the quietness necessary at the beginning of a field study. In addition, of course, a stream of data is continually coming in by itself, and these data will either confirm or suggest modifications of the proposed patterns.

So far I have described the process of study

ing a single unique case. The next step in ethnography is to compare similar cases, or to study one or more cases similar to the first one. "Similar" means same in most respects but different in one or a few respects. In principle this sort of controlled comparison is like an experiment: one takes two or more instances of the same thing and varies some important factor to see what effects it has. For instance, one can study two villages of the same tribe, one located in Mexico and the other in the United States, to see what effect the larger society has on the smaller (Morris Opler). In practice such natural experiments are hard to find, and the similar cases turn out to be different in many ways. Controlled comparison is still possible in such cases if there is a theory that asserts that most of the differences are trivial and only one or two are really important. However, the comparison then depends on the validity of the theory.

"An ethnographic study begins not in the field but in the library."

Such theories in turn have been built up out of controlled comparisons in the past.

Ethnography, and participant observation in general, is a fairly unreliable method with a number of characteristic weaknesses. Unfortunately all social science methods are unreliable in practice, though not in their idealized versions. They are unreliable in part because there are no infallible facts, and in part because there are no infallible scientists. In deed, the only safe rule is to trust only those studies whose conclusions agree with one's own ideas, and to suspect the rest. This rule is a rather common one among social scientists, though I do not have a count.

One characteristic weakness comes from the personality of the observer. The ideal ethnographer should have the right balance of receptivity and skepticism, involvement and detachment. Receptivity or inward passivity and an ability to get deeply involved is necessary at the start of a study, but later as informants' reports and official records are being evaluated and themes tested a good deal of skepticism is necessary. A too receptive person will get taken in by the community's self image and miss the self deception, while a too detached person will never experience and understand the subjective meanings of community life. Similarly, an observer who is more projective than introjective will read his own expectations into the data.

Insufficient preliminary preparation is another source of error. An unprepared observer will miss much of what is going on at first, because he does not have the concepts being used, or does not know the history of those actions, or cannot respond properly and so disrupts the activity. This weakness can be overcome by staying there longer; but normally research time is short and the observer must leave before he has an adequate data collection and enough chances to test his ideas. Instead, he must piece together a plausible story from untested themes and sketchy data, hoping to come back and do a better job some day. A combination of insufficient preparation and too short a stay inevitably produces a poor report.

A too short time in the field also brings with it dependence on too few kinds of data and too few informants. An ethnographer in a hurry can find a talkative informant, full of stories and interpretations and advice on the old ways, very tempting; there are published reports based on one informant or a small clique of informants. A careful ethnographer, of course, would check all such reports against other informants, records, and observations, and would try to see what ax that informant was grinding as well. Similarly, too small a sample of observations brings obvious distortions.

Too short a time in the field also leads to inadequate socialization and therefore an inadequate understanding of what one is observing. The result is that the observer reads his own expectations and interpretations into the observed events and believes he has now found empirical support for them. Participant observation does not have most of the instituted controls that are important in experiments and survey research, so it depends strongly on control by the subjects being studied.

The ethnographer must also be wary of the temptation of power. An introduction to a community by someone in authority seems like an easy and secure mode of access: the authority will vouch for one's genuineness and give one some respectability. People are more likely to talk seriously with a respectable, endorsed observer, while they might ignore or spurn an unknown with no credentials.

Unfortunately the cost of this shortcut is that the observer becomes identified with the power-holders in or over the community. Communication accordingly will take the form that it always does when powerless address powerful: the official culture will be presented

and the unofficial culture hidden. There are many accounts in the ethnographic literature of observers struggling to overcome the handicap of their having been identified with power; there are also a few defective reports by ethnographers who did not recognize the handicap. The safer if slower route is to come in as powerless and unthreatening, and especially as distinct from the community power holders. In a classroom this means that one cannot come in as a teacher like person. Students make the best ethnographers.

The above weaknesses can in principle be avoided or corrected by advance preparation and luck. There are other weaknesses inherent in human cognitive processes that cannot really be corrected but only counteracted. One is the tendency to form a tentative pattern quickly on the basis of a few initial impressions and then search selectively for data that will fit that pattern. In principle all data are equally important; in practice early data provide the themes and patterns that later data can question and correct but never really displace. Some observers form initial impressions rapidly and never change them, while others can tolerate ambiguity and confusion longer and can give up a first diagnosis, but we all act this way to some extent. There is an inevitable sampling bias in ethnography, in that the early samples of behavior have more influence than later samples.

A second weakness is the inherent human tendency to notice supporting evidence more readily than disconfirming evidence. Supporting evidence is welcome because it tells us we were right; disconfirming evidence punishes us. Even if the rules of method tell us to treat all evidence impartially, we would be superhuman if we did not surreptitiously or subconsciously search a bit for the good, gratifying evidence. And it is not really unscientific to be skeptical of negative evidence; first impressions can be mistaken, and the impression that this evidence is negative could be mistaken. Something might be interfering with normal routines and producing abnormal, misleading data; or we might have been fooled by a superficially different activity that is really the same underneath. There are no infallible facts, so it is correct to evaluate all incoming information cautiously. However, it is difficult to be equally skeptical of confirming evidence because it is so welcome.

Some ethnographers have proposed to counteract this bias by conscious search for negative evidence (Becker and Geer, 1961).

There may be a few people who are capable of this.

Finally, there is the inevitable bias of perspective. Every observer is necessarily located somewhere in the community being studied and the community looks different from different locations. For one thing, the observer is either male or female. If there are factions in the community the observer will get drawn into one of them. The initial access point or person will make some portions of the community more accessible than others.

There is a solution to the problem of perspective. Multiple observers. Ethnography should be a team method, with enough observers to locate in each of the main roles of the community. If this is not possible, one can cultivate informants from other locations, or shift one's location slightly. However, both of these strategies take a long time, and multiple observers can provide a better multiple-focus picture in a much shorter time.

The various weaknesses listed above are not always serious problems. Sometimes one's initial access point is a good one and the main structures of the community are readily accessible; a good informant points one in the right direction; the negative data are clear and forceful; and so on. Each case study is different, both in the kinds of data it yields and in the kinds of problems it sets. A good ethnographer adapts her techniques to the case being studied, rather than running through a series of prearranged steps.

For Further Study

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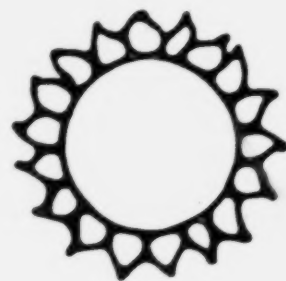
The course is accredited by the University of Virginia. Tuition and materials fees will total approximately \$200. No scholarships are available.

"Using Museums to Teach Writing" will survey ways in which teachers can use local museum exhibits and community resources as tools for teaching writing. In addition to working on formal and informal exercises, participants will interview several Smithsonian Institution staff writers to learn about various approaches to writing.

The course, worth three graduate credits, is open to full-time classroom teachers of grades five to 12, school librarians (media specialists) and curriculum specialists. Interpreters for hearing-impaired individuals can be provided for all class work.

Classes will meet July 5-13 in Washington, D.C. Specially priced housing may be available in a conveniently located college dormitory. Participants will arrange their own meals. Enrollment is limited. Smithsonian staff members will select among the applicants to assemble a group with varied experiences and interests. Applications must be postmarked no later than April 6. Notices of acceptance will be mailed by April 30.

For an application form, including complete information, write to National Seminars, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Arts and Industries Building, Room 1163, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560. ■



The Variables in Lesson Design

One of the ideals in ethnographic research is to report the methodology in such detail that other researchers can use the report as an operating manual by which to replicate the study (Compte and Goetz, 1982:40). But journal articles regularly fail to report adequately their research design and methodology because journals require a brevity made possible by a common language for research techniques. But the absence of a technical shorthand for ethnographic research techniques means that journal articles, in order to be brief, must be incomplete (Peltó and Peltó, 1978). This article, like others not a complete report for replication, gives primary attention to design and methodology, particularly formulation of the problem, validity, and reality, and secondary attention to results.

Formulation of the Problem

In the present study, the problem was shaped by two circumstances: first, the absence of observational studies of the teaching of writing in general and of inner city writing classrooms in particular; and second, the presence of conflicting notions about how to define teaching effectiveness. Until recently observational studies of teaching have focused primarily on the teaching of reading and mathematics and ignored writing (Brophy and Evertson, 1974). In 1980 and 1981 three separate groups of researchers completed studies of writing instruction in K-12 classrooms, two in elementary schools (Van Nostrand, Pettigrew, Shaw, et al., 1980; Clark and Florio, et al., 1981) and a third in midwestern high schools (Applebee, 1981).

The present study narrowed the focus found in Applebee's study in two ways. First this pre-

sented study examined the practices of teachers who emphasize writing, not all teachers. For his purposes, Applebee observed teachers who were willing to participate and presumably some or many of them did not regard the teaching of writing as one of the primary goals of their instruction. Second, this present study examined the teaching of writing in inner city schools, and these schools differ markedly from the city school used in Applebee's study. One difference is that Applebee's city school had a minority population of 20.7%, and the schools used in this present study had a minority population of 90% or more. The present study examined inner city schools because the most pressing problems confronting public schools today are in inner cities, and most experts agree that the ultimate test of any program of educational change is whether it can succeed there (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979:8).

In addition to the absence of observational studies in writing classes in inner city high schools, the present study was shaped by a second circumstance — the presence in school districts of conflicting notions about how to define effective teaching. Teachers in one school district were being told "too much written assignment time" and "too much working with one student at a time" were negatively associated with effective teaching and that "drill and practice" and "short quizzes" were positively associated with effective teaching (The Stallings Observation Strategy, Morgan Hill Unified, 1982). Stallings based her ideal model of teaching on her study of correlations between instructional activities and CTBS scores (Stallings, 1980). A similar model of effective teaching, also adopted by some school districts, was what Barak Rosenshine called "direct instruction": "large groups, decision making by the teacher, limited choice of materials and activities by the students, orderliness, factual questions, limited exploration of ideas, drill, and high percentages of correct answers" (Rosenhine, 1979:47).

At the same time that direct instruction and the Stallings model were being proposed as models of effective teaching for all teachers of academic subjects, Charles Cooper was proposing a quite different model of the effective teaching of writing (Cooper, 1981: xi-xiii). Cooper emphasized the positive benefits of teachers working individually with students on their writing, decreasing short answer quizzes, and giving substantial writing time in class when teachers can give help all matters which Stallings and Rosenshine found to be negatively associated with effective teaching.

Why this difference in models of effective teaching? First, direct instruction and the Stallings' model may not apply equally well to all subjects. The Stallings' model, for instance, used CTBS scores, not scores on writing samples, as a measure of effectiveness. Most of Rosenshine's direct instruction model was based on measures of gains in reading and mathematics. Furthermore, according to Peterson, although students who receive "direct instruction" tend to do better on achievement tests, they do worse on problem solving than students who receive "open teaching" (Peterson, 1981:63). Because writing is a problem solving activity, writing may require a different kind of instruction. The first question is, then, how does writing instruction look in classrooms taught by teachers who claim to be teaching writing?

A second explanation of the difference between Cooper's model and that of Stallings and Rosenshine is that Cooper's model appears to be based primarily on studies of how students learn to write in contexts outside the classroom, not how students learn or how writing is taught in classrooms. Studies from Emig (1971), Perl (1979), Halliday (1977) are examples of the types of studies that Cooper and others frequently use as a basis for recommending particular practices, but none of these studies observed students learning to write in classrooms. Cooper, however, appears to discount the influence of classroom context on

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instruction and argues that his recommended lessons do not appear in the classes observed by Applebee because of "lack of writing and poor instruction" (Cooper, 1981 xiii).

Cooper's conclusion seems to be based on the assumption that classroom conditions should not influence the way writing is taught. Dreeben (1978), for one, has argued that "teachers deal with classroom conditions as much as they deal with individual students." Furthermore, most scholars recognize that the problems of classroom conditions are more intense in inner city classrooms than in other types of classrooms.

"To be sure, the kinds of problems noted are not confined to urban or inner city secondary schools. In varying degrees such problems are found in secondary schools in all geographic locations. The degree of intensity of many school problems in suburban and rural areas, however, is thought to be significantly less than that found in inner city schools." (Reed, 1982:78)

Barr and Dreeben have commented on the failure of many studies of teaching to consider the many variables that influence how lessons are designed by teachers:

"Two characteristics of classroom research limit its usefulness: the tendency to examine only a portion of the events occurring within classes, ignoring others which may bear on the productive process, and the tendency to ignore the contextual properties of classrooms" (Barr and Dreeben, 1980:151).

The first question — How is writing taught in writing classes in inner schools? — was then modified by a consideration of classroom and student variables. As a result, the central question of the study became "How do classroom conditions and student differences appear to influence the way writing lessons are designed in inner city secondary schools?" This question required an ethnographic research design using participant and non participant observation in a natural setting.

Validity:

The credibility of a research design requires that the highest standards of validity and reliability be aimed for, even though each design, to some degree, often exchanges one standard for another. Validity requires that the identified variables in a research project be variables which exist in actual human events, and two types of validity have to be controlled for — internal validity requiring that the data

come from an authentic setting and external validity requiring that the findings be generalizable to other groups in similar settings.

In the present study, the primary control for internal validity is location of the investigation in actual inner city schools and classrooms, and the selection of a wide variety of informants, including administrators, students, the teachers who were observed, and the observers who, for the most part, had teaching experience and who came from research backgrounds in anthropology, linguistics, English or education.

The primary control for external validity is the sampling procedure. First, the five schools selected for study were identified as inner city schools in a number of government documents using typical indicators such as youth unemployment, number of students in EDY programs (Education of Disadvantaged Youth), and concentration of ethnic and racial minorities. In each of the five schools, minority student populations were 90% or more of the total school population, and in four of the five schools 15% or more of the students came from homes in which another language was spoken. In one school, 40% of the students came from homes with a second language.

Six criteria were used to select the fourteen local classrooms with fourteen different teachers: (1) the classrooms were enrolling students from the inner city of the district, not some other area within the district; (2) they contained some writing instruction; (3) they were at various grade levels — 9, 10, 11, and 12; (4) they had courses focusing on writing for students at different levels of writing competency — remedial and bilingual versus general and advanced; (5) they had courses representing different ways of organizing instruction — composition electives and journalism versus regular English classes; and (6) they had teachers with a reported diversity of approach and experience. The fourteen classes included two classes for advanced students, three for remedial, and two for bilingual. The other classes were four general English classes, two composition electives, and one journalism.

A second control for external validity was a sample of national teachers against which local teachers could be compared. In each of seven major cities in different parts of the country (Denver, New York City, Phoenix, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Memphis), twenty inner city teachers ranked a set of an-

chor papers from a school district assessment and completed a two part questionnaire on teaching experience and practices. One hundred and seventeen teachers completed the ranking and the questionnaire, providing information showing that local and national teachers were comparable in such matters as teaching hours, types of courses, range of student writing (the teachers estimated the number of students writing at a given level) and student attendance. However, local teachers had slightly less teaching experience than the national sample.

Reliability:

Reliability refers to the likelihood of obtaining the same answer if one were to measure the same thing twice, and this design problem is the greatest challenge to the ethnographic researcher. Two measures are involved. The first measure involves internal reliability in the collection of data from various sources — Do observers agree about what was observed or said? The second measure involves external reliability in the arrangement of the data into categories or constructs for interpretation — Do observers agree about what the data means?

Data was collected from five sources — interviews, writing samples, questionnaires, school documents, and over 300 full period observations of the fourteen classrooms. The actual items in the questionnaires and documents were used for analysis, and, therefore, these sources presented no difficulties of internal reliability. However, the other three sources did present such problems. For example, because the writing samples had to be coded for type of student error (subject-verb agreement, pronoun case), the coder-observers prepared a list of errors and decision rules for each error, and practiced coding until agreement reached .90 or better. The reliability of interview coding was handled in a similar fashion, except that the data being coded in the interviews was different.

The internal reliability of the data from the classroom observations was checked and refined in two stages of practicing data collection. In the first stage, the fourteen observers and other members of the research staff practiced observations and coding of video tapes of classrooms, to develop an agreed upon set of terms and format for observation notes and classroom layout, a coding matrix for classroom behavior and events during a given period (lesson structuring by the teacher, administrative work by teacher and

students, disciplinary action by the teacher, and response interactions), a form itemizing traits of each writing episode during a class period, and a class summary partitioning the class period into its various segments (opening of class, lesson activity 1, lesson activity 2, and so forth). Decision rules for the various forms and terms were established in three weeks, and during the next three weeks the research staff practiced using the established routines, again on video tapes. A check of the reliability of the matrix coding of field notes showed an agreement on coding in 90% or more of the items.

In the second stage of practicing data collection, the observers field tested the procedures in two sets of classroom visits in different cities. In one visit, researchers worked in pairs so that the agreement in their data collection procedures and results could be compared and any discrepancies corrected. In summary, the classroom observations produced the following documents:

- Matrix of Behaviors
- Segments/Lessons Summaries
- Writing Episode Summary
- Field Notes & Class Layout

These documents became the basis for data analysis, which involves issues of external reliability. For example, the matrix provided a notation for each discipline event during a class period, and the total number of discipline events was calculated from these notations. In addition, because the matrix codes were marked in the left margin of the field notes, at the point where the behavior occurred, the actual descriptions of the discipline events, including student behavior and teacher response, could be easily extracted from the field notes and grouped together for analysis. In the analysis of discipline, writing assignments, interruptions, teacher moves to structure a lesson, and other matters, copies of field notes were cut up and arranged as groups of different kinds of behavior and events.

The first task in data analysis was to separate out the data on different variables in the field notes and in the coding documents (matrix, segment summary, writing episode summary) and group these variables in three levels of classroom context: (1) the writing assignment, including type of assignments given, amount of time spent writing, and variation of assignments by type of class; (2) the

lesson, including teacher moves to segment the class period, opening and closing different activities in a lesson; and (3) the class period, including discipline episodes (student behavior and teacher response), handling interruptions, monitoring attendance, and coordinating resources.

The next step in data analysis was to categorize the discipline events into different teaching styles, the writing assignments into different types, the opening and closing of segments into different teaching styles, and so forth. Because the actual notes on an event were used for developing an analytical category, differences in analysis could be checked against the actual data.

A method of triangulation was used to help establish the external reliability of the data analysis. That is, different members of the research staff and different participants at the school level were asked to give their perspective on how to categorize and interpret the data. For example, the fourteen classroom teachers were asked to sort the teaching instructions of teachers (from the field notes) into categories for assignment types. In addition to the teachers, both local and national, the other informants in the study were 117 students (same total as the national teachers) and twenty-nine other educators, primarily school administrators. The other educators were especially helpful in describing a fourth level of context — school policies, including both institutional (testing, curriculum) and professional (learning, teaching) guidelines. The students gave their views of discipline, writing assignments, and a number of other variables, including a student ranking of the papers scored by local and national teachers.

The study of policy issues influencing writing instruction was based on interviews of six local teachers and twenty-nine other educators assigned to nine different roles and four different administrative levels (state, county, school district, and school site). The twenty-nine other educators were named by various local teachers as sources of policies which influenced the teaching of writing.

These four different levels of context — writing episode, lesson, class period, and policies — were recognized by most informants as different roles played by teachers: (1) the teacher as a writing teacher; (2) the teacher as a teacher of language use in general, including reading and writing, giving and collecting the assignments, planning the lessons, responding to student writing, and establishing routines; (3) the teacher as a Manager, manag-

ing student attendance patterns, class interruptions, discipline problems, and resources for teaching; and (4) the teacher as a Policy Adviser/Implementer, attempting to link policy and practice.

Results

The Writing Episode in all classes averaged 16 minutes and consumed one-third of the total class time. Seventy-one percent of the 10th graders and 39% of the 12th graders wrote samples judged to be below the district's minimum standard for graduation from high school. The reasons for low scores tended to vary from one competency level to another, the papers at the bottom needing fluency, the papers in the middle needing appropriate audience focus, and the papers near the top needing more attention to organizational form. Only five of the eighteen errors rated by teachers as important showed a significant interaction with the scores on writing samples (ANOVA F from 3.39 to 12.94, p from $<.000$ to $<.039$).

Five kinds of assignments were found to occur in writing classes: (1) writing assignments based on reading ("Write about The Miracle Worker"), (2) assignments based on ideas ("Write as many memories as you can"/"Take notes on this"/"Write on one of these topics"), (3) skill assignments, varying from copying to exercises, (4) rhetorical assignments, providing an audience emphasis or an explicit form, and (5) a multiple focus, emphasizing more than one of the other four.

In all fourteen classes, skill assignments were the most frequent, and idea assignments consumed the largest proportion of total class time. However, teachers appeared to vary assignments to fit the needs of particular students. Remedial and bilingual classes had the largest proportion of class time devoted to idea assignments which helped the students with fluency, their greatest need. Composition electives, on the other hand, had the largest proportion of class time devoted to multiple focus assignments. General English classes had the greatest amount of assignment diversity, and Advanced English classes had the smallest proportion of total class time devoted to writing. Students in Advanced classes allegedly needed less on-task assistance from the teacher.

The adaptations for various classes were also evident in the way the teachers segmented their Lessons as they shifted from one activity structure to another. The teachers almost always segmented their class period in-

to more than one lesson activity, the average for the fourteen classes being 2.1%. However, teachers of bilingual students and ninth graders segmented more than other teachers, averaging 2.9 (the highest being 3.4). The reason given for this lesson strategy was that these students had the greatest tendency to drift off task and activity shifts were ways to bring these students on task. The segments in twelfth grade classes averaged 1.9. The classes with few segments tended to occur with older groups, particularly 12th graders, both in Advanced and Remedial classes, suggesting that older students or those who do not drop out can stay on task longer.

Despite the evidence of teachers varying assignments to meet the needs of different students, skill assignments were persistent and frequent in all classes. Short answer assignments (focusing on letter, word, phrase, sentence) were the most frequent assignments (41%), the shortest (10 minutes), and the second largest percentage of total class time (27.3%). This is comparable to the trends reported by Applebee (1981) and lamented by Cooper (Preface to Applebee).

Why this emphasis on skill assignments? Two sets of conditions appeared to give a high degree of "survival value" to skill assignments. The first condition was the flow of management problems during a class period, a flow which will back up and later become a flood if the teacher does not attend to these problems. These problems took the form of 3.19 discipline problems each class period, 1.71 interruptions (school bulletins; messages over the telephone and from student messengers, usually from counselors or the principal's office; events in the halls; the public address system), attendance (taking roll with an average of 30% absent in each class and monitoring/recording 7.4 late students each class period), and coordinating classroom resources (paper, pencils, other equipment).

Skill assignments, because they required a minimum of beginning directions and supporting instruction, gave the teacher the necessary time to set aside instructional responsibilities and turn to management problems. Skill assignments were also an efficient strategy for handling a number of policy conditions which were part of the district's testing and categorical aid programs. Skill assignments focused on small, easily measurable units of instruction which often paralleled the objectives listed in the district policy documents on curriculum and accountability. Reporting the number right and wrong on an exercise was

much easier than reporting development in fluency, audience awareness, or organizational skills.

These are only a few of the results of the study of the teaching of writing in inner city secondary schools (Myers and Thomas, 1982). But these results suggest that good instruction in writing requires an understanding of more variables than those found in decontextualized studies of writing. These studies are useful, but they do not give teachers lessons for classrooms. Lesson design is more complicated than that. What is needed are more studies of great teachers handling the many variables in their classrooms, and ethnography is a promising methodology for meeting this need.

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Reflections on Ethnography and Writing

In 1981, I wrote a research proposal which, if funded, would allow me to leave New York City and my regular college teaching schedule and live for one year in the Shoreham-Wading River school district on eastern Long Island. The reason I was going to Shoreham was that having already been there for three summers directing New York City Writing Project institutes on the teaching of writing and having made brief follow-up visits to the district, I now wanted to document how teachers who wrote and read current research on the writing process went about teaching writing. In fact, my desire to conduct this study came to me quite suddenly one afternoon when I was visiting teachers in Shoreham. I happened to go down to the classroom of one of the teachers and I chanced upon a writing conference that this teacher, Diane Burkhardt, was having with one of her students. I remember thinking that no one really sees the intimate moments when teachers work with students. I knew if I could show what really happens when teachers made a commitment to teaching writing — if I could document the day-to-day interactions and the ways teachers think about what they are doing — that to me would be a contribution to research on teaching worth making.

If I did this, I knew I wanted to be inside the classroom. I wanted to watch teaching evolve. I was firmly convinced that if researchers want to understand a process, they need to observe it as it unfolds — and as a result I wanted to live in classrooms from the first day of teaching until the last. I wanted to come to know the teachers, the students, their writing. I wanted in the terms of ethnography, to immerse myself in the "culture of the classroom," to come to know it as the participants themselves did.

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In 1982, the project received funding from the National Institute of Education. Ten teachers from grades 1-12 volunteered to collaborate with me on the research, which meant that they would each allow me or a research assistant to live in their classrooms, to take notes on what they said and did. They, in turn, would keep teaching journals in which they reflected upon what they were doing in the classroom and they would each do a case study on the writing development of one student in their class. People often ask me, "what's it like to do ethnography?" My response is often a specific one, since I imagine each project develops according to the interests and personalities of the people engaged in it.

To illustrate what our project was like, I'll sketch a typical week.

I wake up at 7:45 a.m. either wondering why I stayed up so late the night before thinking and talking about writing or remembering the last ten years of academic life when I didn't need to be at my college before 9:30 or 10:00 a.m. I then remind myself that Diane and Ross Burkhardt, the two teachers whose classrooms I'm studying intensively and in whose home I'm living, have been up and off to school since 6:00 a.m. and with a pang of conscience get myself out of bed and ready for school. I drive about three miles, past the site for the nuclear power plant that gives the district its money, past the brown, leafless stalks of the vegetable and potatoe fields that border this stretch of Long Island, down the road to the Middle School. After saying good morning to the secretaries, getting a cup of coffee and grabbing my notebooks and a pen, I head for Diane's eighth grade English class which begins at 8:47 a.m.

Diane's students sit in a circle. Once there, I find a vacant seat, pull it into the circle and chat with one or two of the students next to me. In the beginning of the study, I am a diligent notetaker, recording everything I can of what Diane and her students say. Later in

the year, my role shifts from strict observer to active participant, and it becomes common for kids to ask me, "Are we going to do free writing today?" or for Diane, after saying good morning, to ask me if I recall the plan we devised for today's lesson. While the class clearly remains hers and while my job remains that of the researcher taking fieldnotes, by the middle of the year, we have become more like partners and frequently I find myself interrupting my notetaking to participate in class discussions, to answer questions or to share with students my own perceptions about the process of writing.

After Diane's class, I head for another wing of the school and become the researcher in Ross' eighth grade room. Here, although Ross has been through the same summer training as Diane, it's possible for me to see how teachers adapt what they've learned to fit their individual styles. Ross is the orchestrator of events, the prime mover in his classroom, and often the kids are as rapt as I when Ross brings in a recently finished poem and shares the excitement and the process he went through to write it. In fact, the rather direct impact Ross has can be seen in the number of boys who have begun to write poems for the first time in his class.

After taking notes in Ross' class, I return to Diane's second English class of the day. At lunchtime, I often eat with a bunch of eighth grade students in her room. After lunch, I visit a sixth grade classroom and join with students in what their teacher Marcia Sitver calls writing workshop. Here kids can be seen sprawled on couches, sitting on the floor, in the hallways or at individual tables drafting pieces, conferencing with partners or revising their writing. Frequently, students come over to show me what they are doing or to ask for help. Often Marcia can be found off to one side working on her own writing.

At the end of this class, I visit one of Diane's or Ross' social studies classes in which students are writing. Then I generally complete

whatever correspondence I'm working on, return a few phone calls and check in with my research assistants. If this were a Monday, I might also visit classes in one of the elementary schools or the high school. If it were Tuesday, I'd be preparing for our Study Group meeting in which I meet with the ten teachers in the study and with Nancy Wilson and Jamie Carter — the two research assistants — in order to write, to analyze what's happening in classrooms, to raise questions and to discuss together how the writing process approach works across grade levels. If it were Wednesday, Nancy, Jamie and I would meet until late in the night in order to read our fieldnotes to one another, to catch up on what's happening in the different schools, to be listeners for one another as we begin to discuss our perceptions of classroom events. If it were Thursday, Nancy, Jamie and I would have one final meeting together before we prepared ourselves to return to New York City and to our homes.

In addition, this job entails meeting with administrators, making ourselves available to other teachers and at one point during the year we decided that if we wanted to understand the students' perspectives, we needed to "travel" with them to other classes in order to see how and where English fit into the student's day-to-day life in the school.

The point of this though is not just that we've taken on a big job or that we are busy; it's to show, through sketching a little bit of the particular detail, the many contexts in which writing occurs and which we need to be sensitive to if we are to discover anything about how it is taught and learned. To do this, we've chosen to use ethnography as a research tool.

One of the ideas I want to explore in this paper concerns the ways in which ethnography and writing are similar and why so many of us fascinated by the writing process are drawn so easily and naturally into doing ethnographic research. In fact, I've come to see that the principles which underly a process approach to the teaching and study of writing have counterparts in ethnography. I will now present seven of these common features.

1) Perhaps, the most obvious connection between ethnography and writing is that they are both processes: just as the last decade of work on composing shows, we don't discover how writers write solely by analyzing their products — we certainly won't discover how teachers teach by analyzing their grade books or their lesson plans. In order to discover how

a process unfolds, whether it's writing or teaching, we have to observe it and to do this we need a method that itself is process-oriented.

2) A second feature common both to writing and ethnography is that we learn by doing. It's commonplace to say that we'll never learn how to write solely by reading about it or studying what writers say about it; similarly budding ethnographers won't learn the methods and procedures of ethnography merely by reading or studying accounts of other anthropologists. While I'm not advocating the abandonment of careful study and preparation, I am saying that just as we learn to write by writing, so we learn to do ethnography by rolling up our sleeves and getting our hands dirty — in other words, we have to do it in order to learn it and to get better at it.

3) We've come in writing research to believe that writing leads to discovery. As writers, we don't plan ahead of time everything we will say. More often, we discover what we want to say as we go along. So in ethnography, we don't enter a setting deciding ahead of time what events will mean, but we allow the meaning to emerge from our observations and repeated reflections. We may enter with certain guiding questions, but we don't impose our answers. We allow them to emerge from the process of looking.

4) From writing process research, we've come to see that writing is a recursive process. By that I mean that when writers write, certain patterns or routines reoccur throughout the process; we literally go back in order to go forward. For example, writers go back often to words, we reread, we go back to the topic, or we even go back to what we sense about the topic that's not yet in words. So in ethnography we find ourselves going back to fieldnotes, for rereading and studying, to students, to teachers and to our study group for verification and for elaboration, and even more importantly we go back to what we sense occurs in classrooms — to what makes for the context in which writing occurs. Just like in writing, when we go back to the text and let our sense of it tell us where we need or want to go next, so in ethnographic research, when we return to our notes and to the classrooms themselves, our sense of what is occurring deepens and we see where next to direct our observations.

5) In a writing process approach, learning to write involves experimenting with and mastering a number of different forms of

discourse and exploring different points of view. To me, these are more than rhetorical exercises. I think that when writers shape their ideas and experience in different forms, they begin to see not only how rich experience is and how most ideas or experiences lend themselves to a variety of interpretations, but also how they, themselves, play an active role in constructing what experiences mean. Ethnography recognizes the multiplicity of views inherent in human experience. The researcher's perspective is seen as one among many — not as the one representing "the truth." In fact, ethnographers understand that no one ethnographic account is the truth. Yet aspects of what is true for people in particular settings can be rendered and recognized, particularly when people share their points of view and work together.

6) Ethnography is a human model. Born out of anthropology as a way for the lone anthropologist to immerse herself in and come to understand a foreign culture, it now enables us to approach classrooms (something we are very familiar with) with freshness and clarity. In ethnography, researchers do not reduce classrooms to lesson plans or test scores, but rather we seek to bring to the surface what is intangible, hidden or overlooked in the unfolding of classroom dynamics. The reason why we are comfortable using ethnography in our study is because our view of teaching and writing is that they are both human processes that ought not be reduced to linear schemes or checklists. In this sense, we view both writing and teaching as personal and social acts created by individuals within particular contexts. When we take this kind of approach to such complex phenomena we don't end up with neat research designs, clear-cut boundaries and controlled variables. But we do find ourselves involved in an enormously rich task that often requires us to respond on a human level.

7) Finally, what we've discovered that makes writing and ethnography so similar and what must be there for each one to flourish is the development of trust. In classrooms we've begun to see that what allows for writing that has voice is a trusting relationship among the students and between students and teachers — where students feel comfortable about taking risks. Similarly, we've come to see that ethnography like writing offers us the opportunity to go beneath the surface and study what is most intimate in teaching, and that that, too requires the development of trust. ■

Interviewing Strategies for Researching Composing: A Case Study

I once attended a conference on composition at which a speaker remarked that conducting research on the composing process with the methodological limitations with which researchers must work is roughly equivalent to performing brain surgery with a rototiller. Let me qualify that comparison by admitting that investigating the process by which writers compose is extremely difficult. Much of the process cannot be observed; the processes researchers can investigate are only those that writers can be made aware of and can articulate. But understanding how writers actually build a text is important for least two reasons. First, such investigations will help inform and reshape our theories about composing. Second, the theories we formulate will inform our decisions as teachers about curriculum design and methods. The challenge for teacher/researchers is to devise and refine methodologies that will help us better describe writers writing. Ethnographic methods of inquiry are powerful tools teacher/researchers can add to their repertoire of investigative techniques that can help us explore composing within the context of the writing classroom.

Ethnographic methods include observation and elicitation techniques that researchers can employ to probe and describe complex activities like composing. My purpose here is to discuss only a few of the elicitation or interview techniques that teacher/researchers might use to conduct their own studies of their students' composing. Primary among these methods are introspective interviewing and "retrospective articulation," a term coined by Donald Murray that I have borrowed to describe a particularly useful investigative strategy. I will illustrate these methods of inquiry by describing a study of fourth graders'

personal narrative writing that I conducted for which I relied heavily upon introspective interviewing and retrospective articulation. My emphasis will be not so much on the findings of this study, but rather on the methodology that led to the findings.

My study of fourth graders' personal narrative writing was conducted in a Buffalo-area suburban elementary school. I was interested in learning what fourth graders understood about structuring personal narrative texts. I was also curious about what strategies, if any, these young writers relied on to convey to an anonymous audience the significance they attached to the events they narrated. Even though current text linguistics offers several models of narrative structure, I was interested in understanding personal narrative writing from the perspective of the thirteen fourth graders who participated in my study. The challenge then became eliciting from these young writers their understanding of their narrative writing without imposing or suggesting other views of narration or composing to them while I interviewed them.

My first step, after an extensive observation period, was to administer the following narrative task:

Think of a time when you got into some of the worst trouble you have ever been in. Imagine you must write a story about this troublesome time for someone you do not know well. Write your story so that this person will be able to understand what happened and why it was such bad trouble.

I explained to the students that I would use their writing to help me learn more about how fourth graders write stories about themselves. I also emphasized there were no right or wrong ways to respond to the task. While students wrote, I kept a tape recorder running so that I would have a record of any questions or comments writers made during this first composing session. Students' questions are rich

sources of information and suggest paths for the researcher to pursue. For example, one of my fourth grade informants asked me during the initial composing session, "How can I get to the main part (i.e. of his narrative)?" Such a question suggested to me that this fourth grader had internalized a narrative schema that included a feature called a "main part." Of course, this was only speculation, but it suggested questions I would ask the writer during subsequent interview sessions.

After I had collected the narratives about a troublesome time, and after I had transcribed the fourth graders' tape recorded questions and comments, I administered a second narrative task, this time on a topic of the writers' own choosing. Again I taped writers' comments to use as bases for future interview questions. Although the issue of a writer's competence versus his performance is not easily resolved in any study of linguistic abilities, requiring the participants to compose on two separate occasions was an attempt to address that problem. The fact that writers responded to two different kinds of tasks, one assigned and one self-selected, also afforded me an opportunity to investigate some hunches I had about the effects of assigned tasks on writing quality. Requiring that participants respond a second time to a writing task of their own choosing was important for another reason. Arthur Applebee has pointed out, in his own work on *The Child's Concept of Story*, that allowing children to select their own tasks is one way to insure that all participants are faced with an equal task. Whereas the initial, assigned task may have constrained writers in particular ways and thus may have influenced writing performances, the second, self-selected topic insured that the researcher's demands did not constrain performances as much as may have occurred during the initial composing session.

It was not until this second narrative had been completed that I began to use introspective interviewing to elicit information from the

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fourth graders about their narrative writing. Making comments or raising questions prior to the first interview could have potentially cued writers to address concerns to which they would otherwise not have attended. When I did question the writers, I was cautious to remain as non-directive as possible so as to draw the informants out without suggesting to them any narrative features that they had not already discussed. A brief excerpt from an interview transcript will illustrate this non-directive method of introspective interviewing:

M: Could I write about just a time?

(pause) Well, it's got to have something interesting in it. Um ...
(pause)

Researcher: Could you tell me what you just meant when you said it's got to have something interesting in it?

M: Well it would sound boring if you're just telling, "I went to school, then I came home and then ..." of something like that. That's boring, I think. ... Wait. Should I tell about the whole trip?

Researcher: I'll let you decide that.

M: (after completing his draft) There. I don't know how to end it though. So tell me how to end it.

Researcher: What were you wondering about the end of this, M.?

It is very important for the researcher to maintain such a non-directive stance during interviews with informants. It is, after all, the goal of this method of inquiry to understand composing as it exists from the informant's perspective. More directive questions such as "What kind of endings do you usually put on your stories?" reflect the researcher's orientation which is not necessarily shared by the young writer.

Most of the questions I asked the fourth graders, then, were suggested by their own comments or questions about the pieces they had composed. I did, however, ask a series of standard questions of each participant which included the following:

What was the easiest thing about writing this?

Were there things you thought about putting into this story but didn't?

Is there anything you have included in your story that you weren't certain you should include?

Which story was easier for you to write,

the trouble story or the one you wrote today? Why?

What kind of stories do you prefer to write? Why?

What kinds of things have teachers or others told you about writing? Are there things you remember being told to do or not to do?

Do you ever write on your own, outside of school?

What kinds of things do you like to write about on your own?

When you write stories about yourself, do you usually write them a certain way? How do they go or how do you put them together?

Is there something you usually put in first? Next?

Asking these additional questions yielded more information about the writers' understanding of narrative, about choices and decisions they claimed to have made while composing, and about their histories as writers and of their writing instruction. From transcripts of these interviews I was able to abstract the informants' descriptions of narrative structural features. Before I met with individual fourth graders for a follow-up interview, I copied onto index cards the names of narrative structural features the writers had mentioned during the earlier composing sessions. These index cards, then, named the features of narrative text I had understood the fourth graders to mention during earlier composing sessions. But because I had to be certain that I had understood what my informants had taught me about their personal narrative writing, I needed to enlist their aid in helping me check and refine the narrative features I had elicited from them. To do this, I presented each fourth grader with the cards naming the narrative features he or she had discussed earlier.

I asked each writer to talk more about the feature named on each card and to add or delete cards from the deck so they better represented his understanding of personal narrative writing. Participants were then asked to locate these same features listed on the index cards in their own texts. This step was crucial, for it prevented me from making any false assumptions about what the fourth graders had meant by particular features. For example, simply because writers had referred to a narrative feature called "ending," I could not assume that my understanding was the same as theirs. Neither could I assume that one in-

formant's understanding was the same as another informant's. It was from their perspectives I wanted to view narrative writing, so they shaped my perceptions.

Two additional interviewing strategies formed part of my methodology. One strategy elicited fourth graders' responses to narrative texts composed by other fourth grade writers. During a third interview session, I read to my informants four narrative texts I had pulled from the files of the Buffalo Cross-Sectional Study of Writing Competence.¹ I asked each participant to indicate whether he felt each sample text was complete, according to his personal criteria for evaluating personal narratives. The purpose of this probe was to elicit further talk from informants about narrative features to see whether they would mention additional features in their discussions of the texts.

The other elicitation technique, another kind of introspective interviewing strategy, involved presenting writers with typewritten, modified versions of their own narratives. These modified texts offered the writers alternatives for expressing their stories. Writers were asked to comment upon the differences, if any, they perceived among the options for expressing their stories. The rationale behind this methodological approach is important to discuss. I reasoned that fourth graders, or any writer for that matter, might have difficulty articulating their composing strategies and decisions. Part of this difficulty we can account for by realizing that much of a writer's understanding of composing is tacit knowledge. The problem for the researcher, then, becomes how to make writers aware of their composing strategies. Offering writers linguistic options and asking them to describe any differences they see between the choices is one way to elicit talk about this tacit understanding. In explaining differences, writers must rely on and articulate personal criteria that account for the distinctions they see between, say, one syntactic construction over another.

The fourth graders' explanations of the differences they perceived between the original and modified versions of their texts were tape recorded. These tapes were later transcribed and became the bases for further questions and hypothesis building in the same way the other interview transcripts discussed earlier had.

The methodological framework outlined above was particularly effective in eliciting information from my fourth grade informants

about their understanding of personal narrative writing. From them I learned that all thirteen writers seemed to have internalized a narrative schema which may influence the ways they structure narrative texts. I also learned about several strategies these young writers employ to mark for readers the remarkableness or significance they attached to the events they narrate. Additionally, I discovered something about the negative effects that discussion as a pre writing activity may have on students' narrative writing and about the difficulties that lack of engagement with a topic or the fear or self disclosure may pose for young writers.

I am intentionally not elaborating upon these findings because I do not want them to become the focus of this discussion. The point I want to make has to do with the investigative techniques and not with the results they led to. The methods of inquiry I have detailed are ones that any classroom teacher can easily adapt to investigate her own hunches or to formulate her own hypotheses about her students' composing processes. The methodology has some advantages over other currently employed investigative strategies like the "composing aloud" technique that researchers like Janet Emig and Linda Flower and John Hayes have used in their research into composing. The difficulties with asking writers to compose aloud is that some of them, particularly young writers, find it impossible to simultaneously compose and describe their composing strategies. The strategies I have outlined tend not to overload writers by requiring them to simultaneously attend to composing and to a researcher's probing. Writers can raise questions or make comments while they compose if they wish. Most of their discussion of their composing decisions and about what motivated them comes after the writing has already been completed. Donald Murray has offered this explanation of why this "retrospective articulation," as he calls it, is a reasonable means of learning about composing:

Writing is, after all, a rational act, the writing self was motivated by the reading self during the writing process. The affective may well control or stimulate or limit the cognitive, but writing is thinking, and a thinking act can, most of the time, be recreated in rational terms. The tennis pro may return a serve instinctively, but instinct is, in part, internalized consciousness, and if you ask the pro about that particular return the experienced player will be able to describe what was done and

why. If the player thought consciously at the time of the serve, the ball would sail by. The return was a practiced, learned act made spontaneous by experience, and it can be described and explained after the fact (1982, p. 167).

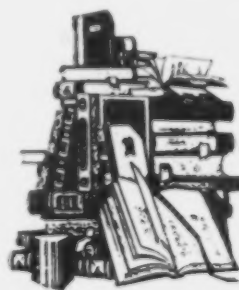
Asking writers to consider, in retrospect, what they have done and why, is one technique researchers may use to probe further in to the process of composing. Perhaps it is not substantially more delicate an instrument than the rototiller the conference speaker spoke of, but it seems at least equally as good as, and perhaps superior to, some of the research strategies currently employed in the field of composition.

Notes

¹The Buffalo Cross Sectional Study of Writing Competence was designed early in 1976 by Charles Cooper, Lee Odell and Cynthia Watson. During the 1976-77 school year, Charles Cooper and Cynthia Watson coordinated the gathering of the writing sample from school districts in New York, Michigan and Illinois. Subsequently, Charles Cooper and Lee Odell supervised the primary trait scoring of the study's sample.

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Major Exhibit on Censorship

The New York Public Library announces the first major exhibition to examine five centuries of censorship in western civilization. *Censorship: 500 Years of Conflict* will open in the newly renovated D. Samuel and Jeane H. Gottesman Exhibition Hall at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street on June 1, 1984. The show will explore political, scientific, religious and moral censorship from the advent of printing to the 1949 publication of George Orwell's futuristic novel, *1984*. The exhibition is drawn exclusively from the Library's vast collections of rare books, manuscripts, pamphlets and prints, most of which have never been seen before by the public. This exhibition will be accompanied by four additional exhibits and a five-month series of lectures and films on the subject of censorship.

Censorship: 500 Years of Conflict, which will run until October 15, 1984, will be the first exhibition to be mounted in the Library's Gottesman Exhibition Hall. The Library's founders envisioned the Central Research Library as an important center for public learning, and they constructed a magnificent 6,400-foot square marble exhibition hall directly behind Astor Hall. This monumental, landmark room, with a carved oak ceiling and marble columns, is one of New York's most important public spaces. The Hall is being restored by Davis, Brody & Associates in cooperation with Giorgio Cavaglieri. General consultation with regard to the restoration project is being provided by Arthur Rosenblatt.

Learning Skills Forum

The New York College Learning Skills Association is hosting its' Seventh Annual Symposium on Remedial/Developmental Education at Grossingers, N.Y. on April 1-4, 1984.

Keynote Speaker: Martha Maxwell
Presymposium Institute Leaders: Frank Christ on Microcomputers and Edward Kelly on Program Evaluation

Special Workshop Leaders: Larry Dolaz, Susan Leffler, Curtis Miles, Jay Sommer and Alfred Pasteur

For registration and information contact:

Anne Parsons
Learning Skills Center
SUNY at Brockport, NY 14420
716-395-2471

The Savages and the Radiator Gang: Teachin' em English

Paradise High School is a unique school. The atmosphere has always been warm, friendly and informal. Office doors are open to students, and teachers are always available . . .

Over the years the student body itself has been unique. The great majority of students appreciate the real need for a good education, and, as a result, are both intellectually curious and studious. Another important factor about our school is the good feeling that students have for one another. Paradise is a very diverse community and its young people come from many different backgrounds, races and religions. Yet, an atmosphere of mutual respect certainly exists, and real attempts for increased understanding among different groups of students are constantly being made.

This statement reflects the principal's long-time view of Paradise High School which serves a primarily wealthy Long Island Jewish community. The district is distinguished from most other suburban towns in that it lacks a strong social and academic middle class. In its recent history, however, the school has undergone change, and human relations in Paradise have been less ideal.

In a recent evaluation of the school by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, intergroup relations were targeted as a growing weakness in the fabric of the school. Related to this problem, the evaluation committee recommended that attention be focused on human relations issues (economic, ethnic, and cultural) which were seen to have "a serious impact on the tone of the school."

Although Paradise High School is a pseudonym, Cheryl Amand is an English teacher at the Long Island high school described in this article. She is also a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of Connecticut.

Looking closely at conflict events, this paper examines human relations problems and classroom difficulties which occurred within the school over a short period of time.

Paradise defines itself as an affluent community, but not all residents are wealthy. Ethnically, Paradise High School is composed of "JAPS" (well-to-do Jewish American Princesses and Princes), blacks (most of whom live in subsidized housing), "greasers" (mostly children of blue collar Italians and Poles), and groups which get lost in the statistics such as WASPS and recent emigres from Asia, Iran, and South America who have been entering the school system with no or limited knowledge of English. In past years there have been sporadic outbreaks of anti-Semitic feelings. In 1978 swastikas were painted on walls. More recently ethnic slurs have appeared on desk tops and in lavatories. Denigrations have been made on occasion by minority students against the assistant principal in charge of discipline (he is Jewish), and members of the Board of Education have voiced concern with faculty anti-Semitism expressed as a reaction against the high price tags on student cars and apparel (Porsches, Gucci, etc.), and their extended vacations in Florida, the Bahamas, Bermuda, etc. At a recent faculty meeting at which discussion focused on the emphasis and pressure placed on students who "have the money" to vacation in such places, one teacher retaliated that "perhaps something should have been done about youngsters from the Valley (where many of Paradise's minority population reside) who took two weeks off last fall to go hunting."

The resentment of blacks and "greasers" toward affluent Jews has occasionally been overt. Some newcomers from abroad also have become targets of interethnic hostility, and there have been occasional outbursts between blacks and the Italians and Poles. These incidents, however, have been generally infrequent and quickly pass. While Jews rarely

engage in outward aggression, minority students clearly perceive Jewish kids as antagonistic ("They are always asking questions in class") and "pushy" ("They challenge teachers about grades. I wouldn't think of it").

When students carry their rich and varied backgrounds with them into a classroom, interactions are generally complex and dynamic; much of what transpires is positive. In 1980 I had been assigned a ninth grade class which was an anomaly in the sense that the typical ratio between majority and minority students was inverted. A parallel disproportion existed within the range of student abilities and disabilities in language skills.

There was a general correlation between the students' basic language competency as measured by the CTBS (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills) inventory of basic skills achievement and the student's cultural background. The class population was composed of:

- 7 black students from the housing project;
- 5 students from the Valley (The Valley population attends Paradise High and is generally white, of Polish or Italian descent, and lower-middle class. Male students tend to distinguish themselves with crew cuts; some wear leather jackets);
- 2 foreign born students (1 Polish; 1 Iranian);
- 1 American born student of foreign speaking parents (Spanish);
- 5 students from Paradise's white, middle to upper-middle class majority (2 Christians, 3 Jews).

Educational specialists within the school system lumped almost half of these students into the categories of learning disabled, functionally illiterate, and marginally retarded. The remainder were weak average students, most of whom were poor performers.

What made this group of students and their problems worthy of an ethnographic study was the degree to which they deviated from the norm of a "typical" Paradise High School

class, composed mostly of white upper-middle class youngsters who are highly motivated to succeed. Such students frequently express feelings of inadequacy and failure when they receive a grade of "B".

While there are two levels of English courses offered for freshmen, the curriculum of each is geared toward the academic student. The Language and Literature course was designed to address the needs of the majority of ninth graders who are expected to read numerous short stories, approximately ten prescribed novels and plays (including Shakespeare, which the class as a whole reads and discusses), poetry and mythology (including *The Odyssey*), and several independently selected works of literature. Writing assignments include the personal narrative and other creative forms in addition to the expository essay. Language is treated as an integral part of the writing process. The second freshman elective, Exploring Literature, is a more intensive program, and work proceeds at a greater level of difficulty. It is usually selected by about 30% of the ninth graders.

Remediation of basic skills in 1980 was accomplished through the "paired class program" in which students of "paired" teachers were regrouped at various times according to skill needs to work on specific deficiencies. The ninth grade program was since modified, and all students are now required to take a writing enrichment course in addition to their regular English class. While the sophomore curriculum offers a General Education course for non-academically oriented students, the English Department has maintained that all ninth year students should be given the chance to succeed in the academic mainstream. Underlying the English Department's philosophy of the General Education program is the belief that "it is vitally important to foster in our General Education students as well as academic students, confidence, a sense of accomplishment, a belief in their own worth."¹ To this end, special emphasis is given to individualized instruction. And, "since the formal education of General Education students often terminates at graduation from high school, it is also important to expand their cultural horizons (without forcing on them a particular culture) and to avoid neglecting their capacity for aesthetic enjoyment for the sake of only technical skill and career education."²

While provisions do exist for vocational training through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services, freshmen are not eligible and course selections at BOCES are strict-

ly occupational. So, this particular Language and Literature class which met eighth period each day was primarily composed of low achieving students who had no alternative program.

"A student does not divorce himself from his social scene when he enters a class."

As I modified the regular curriculum and tried "to teach 'em English," I learned that many of the students in this group were known as "savages" or members of the radiator gang.

The "savages" were a group of black students who, according to white students, went around provoking incidents with white kids "for no reason." As one student remarked, "If one of them gets mad at you, you become the enemy of all of them." A second said, "They bump into you and say things like, 'Don't touch me, girl, or I'm gonna burn your ass,' or they threaten to cut off your hair. That's why they're savages."

Another group of students, identified by the school administration as "the radiator gang," was composed of white students who exist beyond the periphery of Paradise's affluent social life; many of the males separate themselves by wearing leather jackets; they crop their hair in crew cuts; and they claim as their domain the radiators at various window locations in the high school. Students refer to the members of this group as "greasers".

A third segment of the student population was virtually not represented in the eighth period class; this supposedly was the result of happenstance. They are the bulk of Paradise's main stream youngsters whom the savages and radiator kids commonly call "JAPS."

Informal observations of the eighth period class began from the first day of school when it was immediately clear that the group was atypical to a significant degree. In November a racial incident occurred which increased intergroup tensions in the school, and I was assigned to supervise the students in the "black lounge". At this point my in and out-of-class observations became formalized. The core of this case study emerged from four days of intensive observation before the Thanksgiving recess.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Out-of-Class Events

Students in the eighth period class reported that a white Jewish girl has been roughed up by a black girl in the corridor adjacent to the student lounge. The next day it was rumored that the father of the white girl spoke to the principal and wanted to know why there wasn't more supervision.

The Eighth Period Language and Literature Class

Students were given an introduction to John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*. Most of Chapter 1 was read in class. Students were assigned to complete the chapter for homework. They were given a ditto with questions related to their reading. They were told they would be asked to choose one of the questions to write about in the following class. Students were cooperative. Except for observing that three of the four students who were absent had cut class that day (2 black males and 1 white female), I noticed nothing unusual.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Out-of-Class Events

A white boy from the Valley (one of the Radiator Gang) and a black girl who had been involved in Friday's shoving incident were involved in a "bumping incident". The black girl challenged the white boy to "take it outside." The boy obliged. As a result of the fight the girl was suspended. Nothing happened to the boy. The principal stated that the suspension took place because of the incident between the black girl and the white girl on Friday. Black students said the real reason was the way the black girl spoke to the assistant principal. "He said he don't like her language." Feelings of prejudice were generated by the suspension.

The Eighth Period Language and Literature Class

Students were given a spelling quiz and were assigned to write their response to the question they had chosen to discuss. Most students were unable to focus on either assignment. There was a great deal of "talking out" about being "high", and students engaged in exchanging insults and in appearing to try to provoke one another to get into trouble. Squabbles over such issues as who stole whose pen and testiness with the teacher about leaving the room made it "one of those days". Two students were absent; one cut. Of the eighteen students who had taken the spelling quiz, thirteen failed (grades scaled from 0 to 10 ranged from 1 to 6), and five passed.

(grades ranged from 7 to 8.5). Of the fifteen written papers submitted, seven were incoherent. Even though the students in this class were weak, these results were unusually poor.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Out-of-Class Events

The following note was received:

For the remaining two days of school before the Thanksgiving vacation, the following teachers are requested to supervise the student lounge and adjacent lobbies during their assigned duty periods. Generally speaking, there should be no eating or drinking, card playing, gambling, or disruptive activities in these areas. If informal discussions with students in these areas are possible during the period, such would be welcomed and hopefully beneficial.

I was assigned to supervise on Wednesday, period 4.

A vocabulary test was given in the first half of the period. During the second half students continued reading *The Pearl*. The test, in which students were to encode the meaning of unfamiliar words by applying their knowledge of prefixes and suffixes, generated a high degree of anxiety noted by student complaints of "too hard" and "unfair." Six students were unable to complete all the sections because of inadequate knowledge. They were encouraged to review their notes and then complete the test in the study center on their own time. Since none of them did, none of these students passed.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Out-of-Class Events:

Minding the Savages

"Are you here to make us behave?" one student quipped as I entered the student lounge.

"I'm not sure why I'm here," I replied. "What have you been doing in here that made the principal send me?"

Students confided a list of lounge activities which included studying, gambling, smoking, doing "101" something (unpleasant) in the corner, sitting and talking and then going to the nurse for a pass to class.

A comment was made by one student that this was the first time he had seen a teacher sitting in the lounge. In my own observations, I had never seen a white student or teacher in the lounge. Black students labeled the lounge "a place of our own."

As the bell rang to start the period, I went to sit by two boys who were deeply

engrossed in conversation. One boy was recounting to the other the story of "how I got my scars." I picked up bits and pieces of the tale — the cycle, the back yard, the fence, the injury. A minute or so after the bell rang, the boy telling the story said, "Was that the first or second bell?" No one answered including the boy who was listening intently. Three more times the boy interposed the question about the bell in his story. Finally he looked at me for the answer, and I confirmed that it had been the second bell. Then he settled back and rambled in a leisurely fashion to the conclusion. Five minutes had passed while the boy built his story to its crescendo. Then the boys picked up their books and departed in different directions for class.

Resistance to classroom learning was observed in the reluctance of the two boys to leave for class in the middle of the story about the scar. Those students who went to class at the signal of the bell were engaged in confrontational conversations (e.g., "Don't you call me a pig b — — —" "You know I don't steal," etc.). The boys who didn't move off were engaged at a more harmonious and personal level of conversation. The listener was glued to the story by the "what happened to me" aspect of the tale of the scar, an event to which the speaker obviously attached great importance. While the listener did not raise questions about or comment on the story, his attention was completely focused on the story-teller and the tale.

As new students moved into the lounge, I moved my place near some girls I had taught. They were studying at a table set against the back wall of the lounge. In a casual way the issue of the fights between whites and blacks came up. I asked what had happened, and the students told their side of the story. The black girl was suspended because "the administrators are prejudiced." After all, "nothing happened to the white boy." When I suggested that perhaps there was a reason or a part of the story which the students didn't know, one boy volunteered, "They (the administrators) don't ever tell us nothin'." They just pull us in for no reason." Another added, "Yeah, and they threaten to throw us out of here and send us to BOCES full time. They tell us they're going to get rid of us because they don't like how we talk. Yesterday I thought a 'greaser' grabbed me by the collar. I turned and said real mad, 'F — — — off!' It was the assistant principal. He told me to go to BOCES."

Karen added her version of how black students are pulled in for no reason. She had

been walking down the hall; a yellow envelope, pressed against her books, was visible. "You know," she said, "reefers come in yellow envelopes."

The assistant principal noticed her and told her to follow him to his office. "Show me what's in the envelope," he demanded.

"I don't have to," Karen challenged. "It's my property." A second assistant principal and the principal were called in. If the envelope was not turned over, the police would be called in. Someone picked up the phone.

"They do that to frighten students but they hold the button down. It's only a bluff." Karen said she gave over the envelope and they looked like fools when they opened it and found her lunch money.

"Why didn't you let them call the police and really make fools out of them?" someone asked.

"I didn't want to carry it that far" was her reply.

The Fifth Period Exploring Literature Class: Another Dimension

Jane, the white student who had been accosted on Friday, was threatened by two black girls on her way to class. She explained how they approached her — snapping their fingers and taunting "We're gonna get you after class." One of the girls was the girl who had hit her. Jane said, "I never saw the girl before Friday. She pushed into me outside the lounge. I asked her if anything was wrong and if she wanted to talk about it. That's when she hit me."

Another girl who had also been threatened on her way to class said, "They always come on at us without any reason. Then they get mad if we ignore them."

Recalling various "threats," "bluffs" and "irrational acts" they had encountered in their dealings with black students led these students to talk about them as "the savages." (I have not heard this term used since these incidents occurred in 1980).

The Eighth Period Language and Literature Class

Nothing unusual was noted. Everyone was in good spirits. Interest in *The Pearl* was high. The students made excellent progress which made me feel that some days are just better than others.

Analysis

As my observations focused on the events of these four days, I tried to see the students as they saw themselves, began to compare what they said with what they did, and came

to realize that their classroom behavior was often a response to their out-of-class behavior.

Apparently many of the students in the eighth period class had accepted the label of "failure" long before entering the high school. A Paradise social worker noted about black children in the early school grades that they experience failure very early if they are not able to read in the first or second grade. This is a blow to their self-worth. It would appear that even in these early grades the conventional school structures have not met these students' needs.

When I spoke with the four students from the eighth period who had cut class during the four days when racial tensions were heightened, three said they cut to be with their friends who had been involved. One student remarked: "What difference does it make if I cut? I'm not gonna pass anyway." Yet, most of the less advantaged blacks and whites do go to college or vocational school. However, they do not view themselves in the Harvard-Brown league to which most Paradise students aspire. They are, in their own eyes, outsiders with little or no stake in the value system of the school at large. They talk about feeling "put down" by "JAPS". Yet, these wealthy youngsters are not particularly aware of the effect of their lifestyle on the less fortunate.

An elementary school principal commented that class stratification occurred in the upper third and fourth grades. The principal said that by then the brighter students tend to segregate themselves and that the teacher might favor them because they are easier to work with. The have-nots are shunned by the affluent students, an example of intellectual and cultural snobbery. The principal went on to indicate that self-segregation occurs even with groups playing at recess.

Conclusion

These divisions and attitudes clearly affected the way in which the black and less advantaged white students in the eighth period class conducted themselves in the school. With few exceptions they were unable to compete socially and/or economically. Most could not compete intellectually, but of those who could, few chose to. It also became apparent that students from the lower socio-economic settings of Paradise sought more frequent interactions with peers with negative effects on the learning process. For example, there was a frequent need for the students to seek material goods — pens, pencils, and paper while the class was in progress — in order to

disrupt and then to control by means other than acceptable classroom give and take at which they were not good. Students commonly engaged in behavior which annoyed, teased, or insulted others in the class while they themselves sought to be free from competition and interaction.

Many of the kinds of learning experiences structured for academically able students worked poorly with the students who had difficulty learning. For whatever reason, these students generally demonstrated a limited ability to focus; therefore, they appeared to be weak in self-discipline. Activities which presented alternatives and which were designed to help them become independent learners (a goal I have always held for the students in my classes) were problematic in the eighth period setting. The teaching style which worked best for these students was in direct opposition to the teaching style which worked best for others. In the eighth period class, the more apparent the structure was (this included lack of choice, precise direction, and teacher "centeredness"), the more evidence there was of student self-control and self-confidence. Increased interaction with the teacher, therefore, reduced student interaction and increased the level of learning. The relationship between self-confidence and self-consciousness appeared to be inversely proportionate.

The confrontations between white and black students which resulted in the suspension of the black girl were similarly revealed in terms of deviant (unsanctioned) behavior. As white students spoke of these and other confrontations with black students, they claimed incidents were unprovoked and occurred for "no reason." The "irrational acts" cited included threats and bluffs (e.g., threats of cutting off hair, finger snapping, etc.). Similarly, when black students spoke of how they were treated by administrators, they too spoke of threats and bluffs (going to BOCES, calling the police, etc.) and of confrontations happening for "no reason." Ironically, these behaviors exposed a curious parallel between the deviant behavior of black students in the high school and the authoritarian behavior of the school administrators.

My initial hunch that the out of class racial incident was affecting the in-class behavior of the students was confirmed by the increased incidents of cutting to be with friends who were involved and by the poorer than usual performances of students in the eighth period

class on the days when the incidents were most heated.

On Friday when the initial incident between the black girl and the white girl had occurred, class activities went without a problem. There were, as yet, no repercussions. The two day weekend, however, failed to bury the event, and on Monday hostilities were rekindled by a second incident between a black girl and a white boy. When only the black girl was suspended, feelings of prejudice emerged. The eighth period class was characterized on that day by a pervasive restlessness which undermined the students' ability to focus; performance and behavior were significantly poorer than usual. On the third day there were no additional incidents; yet, classroom performance still appeared to be influenced by the previous days' events. By the fourth day the suspension and black-white conflict was still being discussed in the black lounge. However, there was a good deal of intragroup confrontation (i.e., calling one another names). Other conversations like the story of the boy and his scar had nothing to do with racial incidents. As already was noted, the eighth period class by this time had settled down. Yet, a few black girls expressed their anger by harassing and intimidating a few "JAP" girls, one of whom happened to have been the white girl involved in the first day's incident.

With the long Thanksgiving weekend, the interracial antagonisms cooled off. As long as they were inflamed, however, it was apparent that a student does not divorce himself from his social scene when he enters a class. While this is not a startling revelation, the events described did dramatize the influence of one's allegiances on his or her academic and social behavior in school.

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The English Teacher As Ethnographer

Ethnography has proven itself to be a powerful research tool for the study of language learning. I hope to show that the approaches and methods of the ethnographer can be a powerful instructional tool for language learning itself. The English teacher who thinks like an ethnographer can create an environment where students are free to learn in a natural setting, and in an interesting, effective and meaningful way.

First, I will present a framework for an ethnographic approach to the classroom and to the role of the teacher. Then, I'll suggest some general guidelines for the development of assignments based on ethnographic research methods. Finally, I will offer four suggested assignments designed to help students generate meaningful written and spoken language.

An Ethnographic Approach to the Classroom

A central premise of ethnographic research is direct personal involvement in the community. Ethnographers seek to learn what they can about a human group through the open-ended collection of data. Implicit in this view is the recognition that the community is a functioning human group before the ethnographer enters it, and that it will continue to function in ways that the researcher cannot possibly control but only seek to understand. The ethnographer carries no excess baggage when entering the community: no rigid predictions about what will happen, no preformulated prescriptions about what should happen. The ethnographer enters the community with an open mind, knowing as much as possible about what is already known about the subject to be studied, but open-ended in the application of that knowledge to the community (Hymes, 1980). The ethnographer recognizes that the community will continue

to function in complex ways, and that studied concentration on only what is expected or predicted will blind the researcher to other, perhaps more interesting, behavior.

English teachers, too, enter a community every time we enter a classroom. Teachers do not create this classroom-community. The community exists without us, and, sometimes, as we often know too well, in spite of us. Its members are bound together in a complex set of interrelationships. They share the social role of students. Often, they are part of the same generation, with all the shared experience and common understanding that each generation possesses. They may each be seeking a personal identity based, perhaps, on their activities or interests or membership in a group. Our students face us with a pre existing network of "kinship ties," ranging from intimate friend to indifferent acquaintance to feared enemy to self-conscious stranger.

Failure to recognize these "community complexes" as we pursue our own classroom goals does us no good. We know well that the classroom communities we teach often function in a manner unrelated to our own objectives, and sometimes behave in ways we cannot control and often do not understand. More importantly, the English teacher who enters the classroom community with a fixed set of goals and a pre-ordained plan for reaching them risks the blindness to more interesting behavior that the ethnographer has learned to avoid.

The English teacher as ethnographer recognizes each class as a functioning community. Like the ethnographer, the English teacher enters the classroom community with an open mind and begins to collect data from the community in order to learn how it functions and how its members learn.

The English Teacher as Participant-Observers

Participation-observation is the ethnographer's primary method for the collection of data. The researcher participates in the community in order to understand "the framework within which the subjects interpret their

thoughts, feelings, and actions" (Wilson, 1977, p 249). English teachers need to understand our students' framework of thought if we are to help them learn, grow, and improve their skills. To do this we must avoid the role of disinterested expert or skilled authority. The ethnographic model leads us to a different, and, I think, more satisfying, role.

Dell Hymes tells us that good ethnography requires trust and confidence (1980). Few would argue that good teaching requires the same. Ethnographers seek to build that trust and confidence by developing long term relationships with members of the community. The ethnographic researcher associates with community members in various contexts, sharing experiences in the home, in the neighborhood, in religious and recreational centers. English teachers can do the same. Of course, many already do, but an ethnographic approach to the classroom places such student teacher contacts very close to the center of instruction. By associating with students in non-classroom contexts, the English teacher ethnographer is doing much more than showing kindness, or having fun, or being "friends." The teacher is collecting data about what students value and find meaningful in their lives, data that will help the teacher develop valuable and meaningful assignments and activities.

Participant-observation is not as easy as it may sound. Ethnographic researchers must develop a "dynamic tension between the subjective role of participant and the role of observer so that he is neither one entirely" (Wilson, 1977, p 250). The teacher must be careful to develop a similar sort of dynamic tension between the roles of classroom-community participant and professional teacher, maintaining the objectivity needed to help our students learn. Participant-observation can, however, help us gain vital new knowledge about our students: what they believe, the values they hold, the goals they've set, how they think.

Toward Ethnographic Assignments

One of the goals of ethnography is to

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observe the ways individuals "construct their own realities and shared meanings" (Kantor, Kirby, Goetz, 1981 p 24). Making meaning should be central to the English classroom as well. Students make meaning when they connect their inner framework of thought to the outer world of the community. This connection is made through language, as James Collins and Earl Seidman point out:

It is through actual language that students are able to make the connection between their inner personal worlds and the external world of teacher and subject matter (1980, p 5).

As English teachers, we are in a unique position: we can help students improve their language skills, our primary goal, while at the same time we help them make meaning through the use of those very language skills. Writing, particularly, is a meaning-making process, and the ethnographic approach to writing can help the English teacher make writing a vital and exciting part of the classroom community's process of making meaning.

We must, then, develop writing assignments that lead students to "connect their inner personal world of motivation and thought with the outer social world which they perceive and experience" (Collins and Seidman, 1981, p 5). Creating such assignments is not easy. But the methods of ethnography give us a place to begin.

The ethnographer develops questions through observation. The questions rise out of the community itself, based on the researcher's observation of how the community functions, what it finds significant and meaningful.

Similarly, the English teacher's assignments must rise out of the community. This does not mean that the teacher enters the classroom with a blank curriculum. Rather the English teacher-ethnographer enters the classroom with a healthy ethnographer's curiosity. Writing assignments begin with the teacher-ethnographer's desire to gain new knowledge about the community, and the thinking processes of its members. The teacher-ethnographer uses assignments to collect data about our students, and in so doing, to help our students make meaning for themselves.

One might begin with a writing assignment about the writing process itself: What do students do when they have a paper to write? What actual steps do they take? Asking students to complete such writing assignments can give the teacher-ethnographer valuable "data" about the writing process of students, help students understand their own writing

processes, and provide new questions for new assignments. The teacher-ethnographer's curiosity about the classroom community creates questions; questions create assignments; student response to assignments creates new questions for further assignments.

"The English teacher who enters the classroom community with a fixed set of goals and a pre-ordained plan for reaching them risks the blindness to more interesting behavior that the ethnographer has learned to avoid."

Any number of writing and speaking assignments will develop from the teacher-ethnographer's observations. Four specific suggestions follow.

The Commonplace Book

The Commonplace Book dates from Elizabethan times. It is a personal notebook, a place to write and create and keep one's own work as well as the work of others. I've used this device with my high school juniors for the past seven years. It provides students an opportunity to use written language to "make their own meaning," while improving writing skills at the same time. A recent Center for Applied Linguistics study of sustained journal writing confirms these positive effects (Staton, 1982).

I generally introduce the Commonplace Book to my students toward the middle of the year, after they have gotten comfortable with me and with each other as community. Students are asked to write in the book regularly, both in and out of class. The length and frequency of in-class writing time varies with each class, as my observations lead me to tailor the particulars to the classroom community itself. Usually I suggest topics for writing based upon my observations and my tentative conclusions about what the students might find meaningful. Students are always free to ignore the suggested topics and are encouraged to suggest their own topics to their classmates.

Several aspects of the Commonplace Book are crucial. First is teacher participation. I keep a Commonplace Book myself and write in it

as part of the group. Students are encouraged to think of the book as theirs, as a lifetime place to reflect at best, a long term keepsake at worst. They are encouraged to copy published material in it, or, better yet, copy the work of their classmates if they find something particularly meaningful. No one is forced to show their work to anyone but me (and the option of keeping parts from me is left open), but students are encouraged to share what they write with friends and classmates. In short, the Commonplace Book is a place to make meaning for the student, and, hopefully, share that meaning with the other members of the community. Furthermore, the Commonplace Books give me a place to get answers, to gain new knowledge about my students, about what they find meaningful, about how they perceive their world.

The Commonplace Book works. Such reflective journal writing helps students learn about themselves, about what they know, what they feel, what they do, and why they do it (Yinger and Clark, 1981). Furthermore, students write much more than they expect to, generally enjoy the writing, and seem to improve both their attitude toward writing and their writing skills. One student particularly stands out as an example of the assignment's effect. A twenty-year-old remedial student who was struggling to graduate years after her original class, wrote 136 pages in eight weeks and showed progress in both attitude and skills. Many former students report writing in their Commonplace Books years after graduation. Making meaning is a lifetime act.

Epistolary Writing

The writing of semi-public letters is one of humanity's oldest devices for developing and articulating the shared meaning of the community. The epistles of St. Paul stand out as an example. Letter writing heightens the writer's sense of audience and forces the writer to connect inner thought processes with the perceived reality of the readers. As such, epistolary writing seems particularly well-suited to instruction based on ethnographic approaches.

Epistolary writing should not be conceived as an isolated assignment. Rather, the teacher-ethnographer should develop a series of questions and topics based on observation of the classroom community. The questions should lead students to write a series of letters over a period of weeks. Each letter should be addressed to a particular recipient, with the

understanding that they will be read by the classroom community at large. This does two things: it forces the students to consider both primary and secondary audiences, and it contributes to the classroom community's awareness of shared meaning. Addressees can be the teacher, members of the class, or figures from the larger, non classroom community. I think the stress here should be on meaning, the development of arguments and positions, the rhetorical situation, and voice and tone, rather than on any formal letter format. The letter is really a device, not practice in business letter writing.

A good opening question for a first letter might focus on the course itself. What do students hope to gain from the course? What English skills do they perceive as important to their future plans or goals? How might the teacher and their classmates help them improve those skills? This first letter will provide the teacher with helpful data about the students' expectations, and start students in the process of arriving at shared meaning.

As the letter series develops, the class will begin to generate ideas for letters and recipients based on their own sense of what is important and meaningful to them. The class might wish to select a number of the letters for collection and publication in booklet form, an "epistle" that articulates the views and reality of the classroom community. This might be a good series of assignments for the early part of the term, because of the interactive nature of the assignment. Again, teacher participation, as letter writer and recipient, is crucial.

Key Informant Interviews

Ethnographic researchers often utilize key informants, members of the community who possess special knowledge or skills in the areas under study. Sometimes these key informants become substitute observers for the research (Kantor, Kirby, Goetz, 1981, p. 303).

Teacher ethnographers can use key informant interviews to generate both spoken and written language. Each student can become a key informant on some aspect of community life particular to the students' interests or activities: sports, hobbies, political, social, or religious views, travel, etc. Students can be paired to interview each other. The interviews might be audio taped or video taped. This oral language then forms the basis for a written assignment. Again, the interviews can be collected to produce an additional data bank about the classroom community.

Students might also serve as substitute observers in the larger out-of-class community. Each student interviews a key informant from outside the classroom community whose knowledge, interests, activities or career matches the students' own interests. These interviews serve as sources for a written report or character sketch, as well as an oral presentation. The focus here is on making connections between the students' own interests, values and goals and those of the outside informant, thus connecting the students' inner world with the larger social world outside the classroom. The papers produced in this project can be collected and published, providing a connection between the classroom community and the larger community outside.

Using Artifacts

Every community invests value and meaning in things. Researchers seek an understanding of the community's values through an understanding of the artifacts which the community values. These artifacts are important data for any study.

The English teacher ethnographer can use artifacts as an important tool for generating student written and spoken language. Since artifacts are invested with value and meaning, writing about artifacts is a way to write about value and meaning. Students might be asked to search for artifacts that are identified with their generation, perhaps record albums or clothes, posters or books. A discussion of these artifacts will quickly become a discussion of the shared meaning that marks their generation. A non traditional classroom, with students of several generations, will generate a discussion of generational differences. The key question here is why particular artifacts have meaning for particular generations, and what inferences students can draw about the shared values and beliefs of those generations.

Writing about artifacts can lead to important lessons about point of view in writing. Students might be asked to write about their generational artifacts from the point of view of their parents. In another assignment, key informant interviews might be arranged to collect artifacts from other generations. Students then might write about those generations from their own point of view. This series of assignments can help students see the importance of point of view in the development of text.

Summary and Implication

The approaches and methods of ethnography can have a profound effect on

the instructional approaches and methods of English teachers. I have tried to present a framework for an ethnographic approach to the classroom, some general guidelines for the development of classroom community based writing assignments, and some specific practical suggestions for such assignments.

Teachers will, of course, develop other kinds of writing assignments and may wish to tailor their own successful assignments to the ethnographic approach. I do not wish to suggest an entire curriculum here, but a new approach to curriculum, an approach that grows out of the concept of class as community and seeks to create meaningful assignments through participant observation and the professional curiosity of the teacher ethnographer. We may even find some assignments imposed upon us, through the need to prepare our students for departmental placement tests, state competency exams and other facts of the larger, outside community. Ethnography is nothing if it is not flexible, and the English teacher ethnographer must be flexible as well.

Many other implications of ethnographic instructional techniques remain to be explored. How might the English teacher ethnographer approach grading and evaluation? What are the implications of ethnography for our approach to reading and literature? These and other questions remain open as we seek to use ethnographic approaches to improve the quality of English instruction.

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Bridging the Paradigm Gap – Adopting An Expert-Practitioner Stance

I planned this study to improve my teaching. Years of feeling pressured not to teach as I wished had left me angry and frustrated. There wasn't time to meet my goals and those of others, and when I tried, the two approaches undermined each other. What I learned from this study has not only made me a better teacher, it's helped me see why my compromises rarely worked and why my conscientious and informed teaching often frustrated me.

I was familiar with research on how writing is done and learned (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1975; Perl, 1979; Sommers, 1978). I knew that traditional composition texts neither describe what writers produce nor reveal the strategies used in producing them (Braddock, 1974; Christensen, 1967; Ellis, 1967; Emig, 1971). Emig's was the first of many process studies to confirm my intuition that traditional composition instruction could damage student writing. I also knew grammar taught directly, out of context, wasn't often applied (Petrosky, 1977), and experience confirmed it had little effect on what students wrote for me. Reading Moffett (1966) and Macrorie (1968) had led to early breakthroughs, but I still wasn't the wonderful teacher I believed I could be. Though I was armed with theories about how I ought to teach, I felt frustrated by uneven success. I was looking for a study that would make my teaching better.

Then I began to notice complaints by writers about how English had been taught. Strange, I thought, that we English teachers hadn't paid much attention. As early as 1920 Lafcadio Hearn (1920) warned Tokyo University writing students to distrust every rule they found in composition books: The only rule writers can

safely follow, he said, is to do what works for them. Hearn went on to spell out many learning principles just recently "discovered" by writing process research. A few years later Hughes Means (1929) documented impressive results in a school where writers taught writing from experience. Here, I thought, was a research focus that could move me toward my goal: I would study how writers teach.

On the assumption that, all else being equal, writers should be better writing teachers than people who do not write, I began to examine what writers who teach do. I'd known writers who taught in traditional ways, so I looked for those whose teaching grew solely from experience; and because I was training teachers, I looked in middle and secondary schools.

Data Gathering Approach

To zero in on the writers who were also the best teachers, I combined a pyramid design (Graves, 1975) with progressive focusing. Beginning with as large and diverse a group as I could find, I collected increasing amounts of information of fewer and fewer writers. I talked to over 100 writers, did two hour interviews with 23, and spent a day or two observing the teaching of eight. These last were chosen on the strength of their reputations, on the quality of their students' work, and on what they said in the interviews. My criteria proved useful in distinguishing "expert practitioners" — writers whose teaching was rooted in experience — from a larger group of writers whose teaching was patterned after established traditions.

Next I spent a term each in three writers' classrooms. Three to five days a week I taped everything that happened on an inconspicuous tape recorder. I poured over teaching journals and logs, over students' and teachers' writing, and asked questions of everyone in sight. As a theory to account for what I saw began to emerge, I did confirmatory interviews with teachers and students. I collected any infor-

mation that might shed light on the hypotheses I was refining and transcribed two thousand pages of audio transcription alone. When I checked the emerging analysis against my notes and interviews and, later, against writers' perceptions of their work, all writers could be placed in one of several categories. By an inductive process of analysis I accounted for the failure and success of the writers studied, but what helped me most as a teacher was watching expert practitioners teach.

Something of What I Learned

Figure 1 diagrams relationships between writers' teaching approaches and two competing paradigms of behavior and belief that shaped the teaching they did (Nelson, 1982). "Writing" paradigm values, beliefs, content, methods, attitudes, and sequencing are rooted in teacher's personal experience as writers. In the "Composition" paradigm, by contrast, established traditions shape teaching approaches. These paradigm names reflect a distinction between "composition" and "writing" consistently made by all writers interviewed. Adopting familiar "composition" approaches, which I'll describe more fully later, led to failures and frustration and to elitist attitudes while expert practitioners enjoyed improved student writing, growing reputations, and a passion for their work.

Four principles organize the data on teacher development (Nelson, 1981):

- 1.) The most important influence on teaching success and enjoyment was the role model on which writers patterned the teaching they did.
- 2.) To become an expert practitioner a writer had to consciously reject all composition-paradigm values, beliefs, attitudes, methods, content, and instructional sequencing.
- 3.) Teachers who were unaware that the two paradigms were contradictory could improve their instructional approaches if given

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support for change.

4) Teachers who adopted an expert practitioner stance experienced dramatic increases in professional gratification and success.

A Universally Successful Approach — The Expert-Practitioner Stance

Writers Morty and Barbara adamantly rejected what they called "composition" to teach "writing" strategies they themselves used when they wrote. Impressed by a collection of seventh and eighth graders' stories, I called to say I was studying how writers taught composition and asked to interview them. Morty's reply alerted me to the composition/writing distinction, and the in-depth studies that followed showed him and Barbara to be expert practitioners:

We don't teach any composition, Marie but our kids do a *helluva* lot of writing. We don't teach writing the way we were taught — we teach it the way we *learned* it. I never learned a *thing* about writing from an English teacher! I learned to write by writing — and from my friends who write.

Expert practitioners share many traits. They view their role not as "English teachers" but

as "writers training writers." Their classes are workshops where they model how writers feel and act, get students to start drafting, point out what works, point out what isn't working, and teach students how to make weak parts strong. Instead of grading individual papers, most hold out the kinds of rewards that motivate them — publication, pleasure, self-fulfillment, influence, recognition, prestige, money, emotional release, and opportunities to effect change. They establish classroom communities (political, personal, journalistic, imaginative, academic) like those in their out-of-school lives and use similar approaches, whatever writing they teach.

The stance is successful for many reasons: it is grounded in understanding of what motivates and encourages writers, softened by empathy for the problems beginners have, toughened by intuitions about when students need to be "pushed," and motivated by quality. Expert practitioners understand that every writer works differently but that different external behaviors can result from similar feelings about the work.

Writing-paradigm changes — The upward spiral of increasing success

Success led to changes in how expert prac-

titioners taught and in how they were perceived. Reputations improved quickly, with students competing for places in their classes, and teachers asking for advice. Seeing colleagues struggle prompted them to explain how they taught, thus becoming role models for teachers in their schools. They grew active in professional organizations, gave workshops, started contests and magazines, and published professionally. All developed statewide or national reputations.

Nor was their teaching stagnant. Empathy led to more effective methods ("You've got to follow the kid!"), as students explained what they needed in order to write. Blending experience and sensitivity helped even weak students write well, convincing expert practitioners that "everyone can write."

Morty: Martha and I believe that *all* students that almost every kid, can write with the sophistication of a junior high short story teller. In other words, if Fitzgerald were here in our class, he'd be a fairly good writer, you know? Or maybe a *real* good one. We believe that kids can all write like artists, that any kid can write with artistic sensibility — *GOOD* in other words!

Barbara (in a speech to teachers): I would like

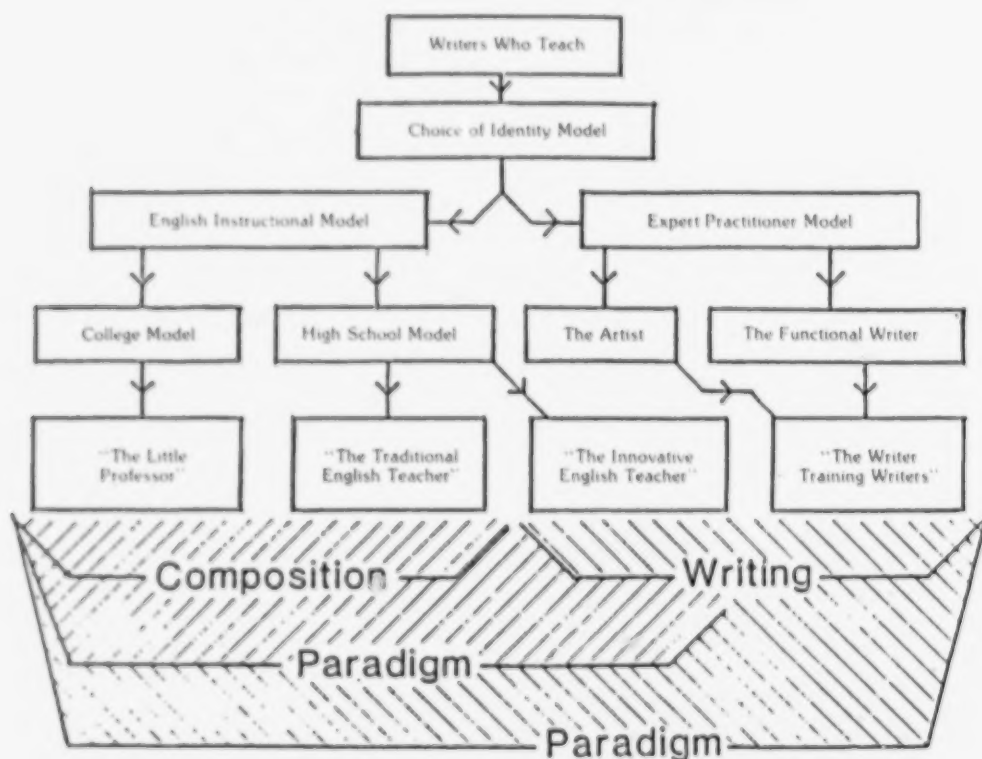


Figure 1. Relative influences of the two paradigms on the identity models.

to begin by asserting that creativity in writing, that *talent* is spread so widely throughout humanity that were all of it to be revealed to us, we would have to redefine what talent means. To say it another way, there is hardly anyone in this room, in this city, in this state, who could not write a warm, moving, insightful story with properties of structure and language that would shock us with their originality and aptness . . . Is writing a part of our equipment? I believe that it is.

When positive expectations replaced negative ones, a self-fulfilling prophesy began to take effect, confirming and reinforcing already positive results. Expert practitioners' teaching exhibited an evolutionary perfectability, a consistently upward spiral of ever-increasing success, in part because they rejected the assumption that good writers are unique. Implicit in that "composition" assumption was a seemingly benign elitism that pressured would-be "writing" teachers to teach "composition" instead and led to the failure and frustration they experienced when they did. Barbara's words showed how elitist attitudes became discredited with expert-practitioners.

B: We find that every year we get better writing from the kids.

M: How does that work, Barbara? Other people need to know how to do that.

B: Well, one factor is that we gradually became confident that the ability was there. When you first start teaching, you have a few kids who are interested in writing, who give you a few good things, so you think at first that this is your writing element, that this is the percentage of writers in your class. You do that, you know! But when you see everybody can do it, that you're not threatening kids by pushing them up against something they can't do, you go ahead and push.

Such claims would have been hard to believe if I hadn't read the students' writing. I wanted to know how Morty and Barbara did it. Both claimed they no longer "taught" directly, that seventh graders "picked it up naturally" from eighth graders who'd "caught on" the year before.

Morty: I think there is no one way they pick it up, mostly by osmosis and assimilating it all, and by what's read in the Creative Writing group. I mean, these kids who come back after the summer, they're rearing to go! The new kids pick it up from them.

Standards were high at the Friday readings. Some students' first pieces were read and discussed; others worked months for this reward. This belief that experienced students were good models was confirmed by all the in-depth studies: expert-practitioners classes cut across traditional age/grade boundaries, allowing teachers to capitalize on student experience.

Composition-Paradigm Roles: Three English Instructional Models

Few writers I studied were expert practitioners; most saw themselves as "English teachers" rather than "writers training writers." Though all drew to some extent on writing experience, failure and frustration resulted when their teaching conflicted with it. So did weak student writing, ambivalence, self-doubt, elitist feelings, and burnout. The following excerpts from the interviews illustrate these writers' perceptions:

Frustration, defeatism: I think it's probably impossible to teach writing anyway, Marie, because in school you have to give grades, and there is *nothing* more harmful to writers than the fact that we grade their work.

Elitism: In the past [writer] friends have come to speak, mostly for creative writing classes or advanced sections I have. It isn't that I don't have speakers for other classes, but they just wouldn't appreciate this.

Ambivalence: We *have* to teach essay formulas to "teach them to think," but as I am sure you know, Marie, that's *not* how people write."

Growing elitism: The first year anyone could take creative writing, and it was a *nightmare*, with people who could not compose a sentence, who should have been learning to make a complete thought. After a year or two we limited the course to advanced tenth graders and offered one really "top" class. Most students need good basic courses.

Burnout: High school can kill you, Marie. There's just no way one person can do all you have to do to do a good job. My family insisted that I not do a magazine next year with the students unless I get time to do it. Some burned out writers escaped frustration by blaming failure on students.

Marty: I've come to a decision about your project . . . I have some very poor classes this year, and have decided not to punish myself and them by concentrating on

writing. I plan to stick with grammar, and I don't think grammar classes were what you had in mind. The classes are such that I'm giving serious consideration to terminating my teaching here.

"Writer schizophrenia," but why?

I wanted to understand these teachers I came to call "writer schizophrenics" because their teaching was rooted in a received set of assumptions about writing and learning, even though their writing experience led them simultaneously to believe another. "Schitzy" writers didn't have emotional problems, but they were frustrated because when teaching they ignored how people write. For the third and final in-depth study I decided to explore the "schitzy" patterns revealed by the interviews.

Writer-schizophrenics adopted three composition-paradigm approaches, each associated with an established instructional tradition (see Figure 1). One ("the Little Professor") was a stereotype of Freshman English instruction. Two others (the "traditional" and "innovative" teachers) were more typical of secondary schools. Though these teachers knew about writing and interacted as fellow writers with "advanced" or "talented" students, none had resolved inconsistencies between their writing and "English teacher" roles. Some had not noticed them. Simultaneously accepting incompatible paradigms had undermined even experienced writers' success.

Carla was an example. To write, she'd left graduate school and gone from college to high school teaching, later quitting to live two years on \$7,000 saved for a car. Thirty years later her fourth novel had been accepted for publication, but she felt unsuccessful teaching. Why did she teach as she did?

Carla: It's the courses I teach. If I taught *writing*, it'd be different. When I first taught in college, I was more successful, but I didn't teach much *composition*. Since teaching high school, I haven't been satisfied with the job I'm doing — I don't know if they learn anything from me!

Pouring over hundreds of transcript pages, I found consistent patterns in what frustrated writers said. None relied on experience as a primary source of content or methods. Writing-paradigm knowledge was ignored in favor of established teaching traditions and composition-paradigm assumptions about "what English teachers are supposed to do." As one innovative teacher said:

Gary: I'm not doing my job if they can't write

a five-paragraph paper or develop a thesis or central idea."

Schitzy writers accepted some Composition Paradigm attributes — some attitudes, methods, values, beliefs, goals, content or instructional sequences. Most argued that "writers are born, not made"; and patchy success made their conviction hard to shake. They assigned outlining, punctuation, or sentence combining instead of (or before) letting students write. Some taught rules they didn't use — rules absent from writing they admired ("Always plan what you're going to say before you begin to write," "Be sure to put a topic sentence at the beginning of every paragraph," "Never use 'I' in an essay"). Many required students to "master the fine points of grammar before writing freely" though they claimed studying grammar couldn't help anyone write. Even those accepting "writing" values acted on incompatible "composition" beliefs, a single one of which could increase frustration and lower self esteem.

Why did writers teach "composition" despite frustration and ambivalence? The most powerful "composition" attributes were pressure to prepare students for success — "over at the high school," "in college," or "on the SAT" — and the belief that preparation must precede, not accompany, writing.

Tim: I can't teach creative writing. I spend my time trying to get students to write a decent sentence. There is no time to do anything else, and you have to do that first. We offer all levels of "Grammar and Writing," but the things I do for my own enjoyment I would never do with a class. It's tragic, but I have to get them ready for college — 101 and 102.

Now I'm not critical. You've got to know how to write a paragraph that can communicate before doing something creative. I really believe that.

Invalid and unexamined assumptions about learning overrode Tim's knowledge of writing, leaving him bored and convinced his students weren't ready to write. Even writers who rejected composition assumptions succumbed to pressures. Marian wanted to offer Cultural Journalism so she could advise the school magazine during, not after, school, "That's not the kind of writing we teach," Marian's department chair said. Her principal explained: "You can teach any way you want — after you cover the book!"

Elitism. Schitzy writers seemed committed to all students. But teaching approaches

unrelated to how people write limited their success to the bright and talented, reinforcing the belief that writers are born, not made. Phil was excited about his writing workshop for seven talented writers, but when asked why his other classes were different, his elitism showed: "I'm not sure it would work. I'm not ready to try it with all kids."

A Cure for Writer-Schizophrenia: Adopting a Practitioner Stance

The degree to which schitzy writers kept up with writing theory, practice, and research affected their teaching, the more informed teachers adopting more successful innovative approaches. Expert practitioners, by contrast, might be poorly informed about such things, it being sufficient to reject received traditions in favor of experience. Most innovative teachers, and two expert practitioners I found, were influenced by English Education programs. Though Sam and Cassandra started as schitzy writers, increasing awareness and outside support helped each become an expert practitioner.

Sam: A Case Study

Sam had done so before I met him. Far more successful than most high school teachers, he was named Teacher of the Year by the Georgia Council of Teachers of English in 1981 and his book on teaching writing was published by Boynton and Cook. Determined to help less successful teachers, Sam had taken leave to work on a doctorate. Though I couldn't observe his high school classes, I sat in on his university teaching of writing course twice and interviewed him early and late in the process of this research. Trying not to prejudice Sam's answers by revealing what other writers had said, I tested my expert-practitioner category against his case. The following excerpts from my transcripts show that Sam now fit the characteristics of that group:

I'm not sure a sizeable portion of teachers would agree, but unless they have some serious disability, all kids can learn to write.

They've been inhibited by teachers. They've had such BAD experiences.

I try to respond more as an editor than as the stereotyped idea of an English teacher.

I think that my own writing — because I'm writing and write with them — has a great deal to do with how I look at theirs.

If it isn't working for me, it usually isn't working for them.

I do a lot of poetry with the kids because I like it and it's something they can't get from other teachers. I model that for them a lot.

I'm not just reading the words in front of me, I'm thinking about how they did it and how, if they're going to do more with the paper, they can do it better. Maybe we can add another step, or I can set things up so it still comes from them, but that they get another perspective on it.

I teach grammar out of their writing — very little direct teaching at all.

For the last 10 years I write every day, or try to . . . That's probably why I have the kids do that too. They write better when they write a lot, as long as they're writing something they want to write.

M: Do you see improvements in the writing?

T: Hmm . . . They are able to write with more apparent ease, are more willing to take a chance. Their writings get longer. I can see the papers literally growing from day to day. I can see progress in a week.

As they get more fluent, the sentence structure gets better, more varied. Most of them begin to develop a very internalized, very subjective sense of form in writing . . . And it's nice to see that happening, because it comes from within them, so it's a very natural growth.

The imagery gets better. They use more metaphor, imagery in the broad sense, more similes, more synecdoche. They play with words more. And they make the little subtle twists and turns they make in oral language. It's amazing.

M: To what extent is good writing related to I.Q.?

T: I don't think it is at all! God, that's an iconoclastic statement! I don't think good writing is related to I.Q. . . . it's across the board. They all improve if they try.

M: Is a major goal for your students to prepare them for college?

T: No. No. No! Definitely not. Never!

M: How do you like teaching in high school?

T: It's exciting . . . It's sort of like mountain climbing. Not everybody can survive it, and do it well. I get a thrill out of that aspect.

M: Have you influenced other teachers [asked before his book came out]?

T: God, I hope so! I've tried hard to. Yeah! [Teachers] see my kids being successful and want [theirs] to be successful too.

M: Do you sense any conflict between your role as writer and as teacher?

T: [After a 25-second pause] No.

In addition to confirming characteristics of expert practitioners, Sam served to test my theory in another way. Checking out practitioner claims about the upward spiral, I found he'd gone through other changes too. He'd experienced the downward spiral of increasing failure and frustration:

T: I've been teaching 13 years, and my teaching's changed a lot. There was a time — I was teaching Freshman English — when I was regularly failing over half of my class — *every quarter*. I had a *horrible* reputation as a teacher, and it was well deserved. I'm very ashamed of that now . . . I was very frustrated, I was really very unhappy.

It was Sam who provided the name for one of the schitzy instructional models:

T: I was the miniature college professor, or I was trying to be.

Secondly, Sam's sense of failure had prompted schitzy model-hopping. He'd become a traditional teacher as his first move away from the college model.

Things changed when I got to high school teaching — after I got fired. I had to find a way to make it work. I had to find a way to make it work.

Like every schitzy writer, he had sometimes drawn on experiential knowledge:

T: There was always a part of me when I was teaching that was a writer. I talked about my writing from the first year, even though I taught very badly. I've always tried to give them tips from the way I wrote.

When I first taught I was very much into this idea of "Oh, it's got to be so good, we've got to get these people grown up, and they've got to be able to go to College, and not make mistakes. And so I was into looking at the product and

not the process. Somewhere that changed.

M: And when that changed, what did you start trying to do?

T: I did a couple of things. I started looking at kids' writing. What I was reading at the time strongly influenced me. Steve Judy made me stop looking for what I could mark wrong and start looking for what was good.

Son of a gun, there was some good stuff in there! I had been going through hunting errors before. Then I saw the kids reaction to the change, and I saw them be willing to take a chance more that way.

I also started looking to make the classroom interesting because it's easier to survive as a teacher. It got easier to get through the day, so I kinda moved from there.

As with expert-practitioners Sam's new "writing" attitudes and approaches were immediately reinforced by improvements in student work.

I was having such a hard time, and I was feeling so *terribly* unsuccessful. I had to find something that would work!

I gradually latched onto a few things that would work, and then I'd move to that spot. Then I'd find something else, and I'd move on to that. And you know, things started opening up.

Sam had been influenced toward innovative teaching by English educators — Kirby, Judy, and Macrorie at first; later Elbow, Murray, and Graves.

T: But it was more than just reading it. It was reading it and going into the class the next day and trying it and saying, "This works!" I got a lot of almost immediate stroking from it.

M: What made you want to try it? Or was it just desperation?

T: No, it wasn't all desperation. A lot of it connected to me as a writer. And so I started — about four years ago — making connections between my teaching and my writing, looking at the processes introspectively a lot.

Having a good role model to pattern after also helped Sam effect the stance:

Dan [Kirby] taught me a lot, because the classes I had from him were *model* classes. We did the things we'd soon

ask our kids to do, and I saw them working for me.

Sam confirmed two tenets of my analysis: that the instruction writers experienced influenced teaching success and that the teaching "model" they adopted was its most important determinant. Though his upward spiral began from a baseline of failure while Morty's and Barbara's began with success, Sam's strategy for evaluating his work was the one that caused the other two teachers to discard the elitist expectations they had brought to teaching. Sam's transition resulted from a desire to avoid further failure while Morty's and Barbara's grew from empathy ("You gotta follow the kid!"). Willingness to discard attitudes, methods, content, sequencing, beliefs, and values that didn't work had fueled these writers' upward spirals of increasing success.

M: Can you pinpoint the most influential factor or factors shaping your present teaching?

T: Well, the main thing happened inside me, and that was that I stopped looking for the bad and started looking for the good.

Sam had become an expert practitioner the hard way, out of desperation, by reading theory and research, by being lucky enough to have a teacher who modeled "writing" rather than "composition," and by examining his writing experience. Unfortunately, few schitzy writers had bridged the paradigm gap. The large majority of the 100, and most of the 23 interviewed, had adopted *composition* approaches despite ambivalence. Many had been in English Education programs, some studying with the same teachers Sam and I had had. Why were so many so frustrated?

Cassandra's Process of Change

To understand the factors influencing these writers and in hopes of helping others succeed, I had observed Cassandra's teaching and watched her become an expert practitioner under my very eyes. I'd met her through the Language Education Department and was impressed by what she said about her work. She drew on experience often — reading her stories, talking about where they came from and how they grew, modeling her way of finding story ideas by skimming the *New Yorker* until an interesting first sentence caught her attention, then "jotting aloud" before a class until her own writing took over and she set the magazine aside to write.

I asked about the classes Cassandra taught. Writing for Fun and Fluency was a model of informed teaching. Developed in an education course, it was the first of an innovative sequence (Writing for Fun and Fluency, The Joy of Writing, and Writing to be Read) for students "who'd failed two or three times." The move was prompted by frustration and failures with students:

I was so frustrated because I kept having to fail so many of my basic students. Almost all of them had failed at least a couple of English courses, but I didn't know what else to do.

Cassandra was documenting her experience, using participant observation, for her Educational Specialist's degree research, and the course was already improving student writing and attitudes. It was also influencing teachers. The next term a fellow-teacher taught two sections, with Cassandra passing daily activity plans to her. To the extent they were compatible with all attributes of the writing paradigm, innovative activities led many schitzzy writers to partial success.

In an "Option I" essay course (for the 30 smartest tenth graders in the school), Cassandra adopted a traditional teacher role and used a sophisticated essay formula — "to get kids ready for college," she said. Though she lamented that "people don't write that way," she made no apologies for grading "just like Freshman Comp teachers, strictly on grammar and mechanics and how they follow the form." Students had convinced her she was doing the right thing. "They all come back to say they wouldn't have passed Freshman English without that formula." Cassandra showed ambivalence, though, defending the course repeatedly based on the local college's "tough reputation" in English 101.

Cassandra's teaching was changing, but it had also changed once before. She hadn't always taught traditionally. When she started in the late 1960's she'd been much more innovative until other teachers had called her "naive" and gradually "brainwashed" her into "preparing students for college." Lately she'd found a rationale for the innovative methods she'd once used.

"I've always done these things, Marie. It's just that the people [in the Language Education Department] have given me support for the things I used to do and I'm doing more of them now. I used to tell my idealistic student teachers, 'These things really do work; don't

listen to the teachers who try to put you down.'" Then I got brainwashed too."

Cassandra's schitzzy model-hopping showed a conscientious desire to help all students. She'd begun as an innovative teacher, later adopting a traditional stance. Now, with theory and research and the support of professors, she was returning to an innovative approach. Other factors aided in the change. As the new coordinator of her department, she could influence course offerings and determine her teaching schedule. From one sequence she inherited ("the sentence course," "the paragraph course," and "the essay course") she had retained only the last, because "you can't learn to write in tiny little bits." She'd made additions too. The sequence for basic writers was expanding, and after seven years of not being allowed to teach it, she was planning to offer Creative Writing the following fall.

A combination of factors leading to increased awareness of inconsistency appear to have nudged Cassandra across the paradigm gap. On my first day of observation she announced the first change: "I decided if you cared enough about my teaching to commute 140 miles a day, I could at least offer Creative Writing now instead of next fall." I was pleased, expecting to watch her teach like an innovative teacher in Fun and Fluency, traditionally in the essay course, and like an expert-practitioner in Creative Writing. If so, she would contrast neatly with Morty and Barbara who relied on experience whatever kind of writing they taught. But from the first day, Creative Writing became "a discovery" that affected every class Cassandra was to teach.

The next big change came two weeks later when Cassandra announced an "experiment" to the essay class. She was throwing out formulas to teach this course more like Creative Writing, but as she'd never written an essay, she'd be learning along with them. From that day on, all Cassandra's courses grew more alike, and improvements in student writing soon led her to say:

I think now what would be best is to offer five sections of creative writing and lump the kids all in there together — basic kids, Option I students [advanced], and creative writing types. They learn so much from each other. If I could only give repeated credit like they do for Art and Chorus and Band!

Increasing reliance on writing approaches could be traced to several sources. For one thing, Cassandra began to see her teaching

through my eyes. As we became friends, I began staying overnight with her once each week and we would discuss the discoveries she was making. At the same time she was examining Fun and Fluency for her Ed.S. research and teaching her first creative writing course since her teaching had become traditional. She was also seeing immediate student success.

There isn't space for me to detail Cassandra's journey that spring except to note that by the end of the term she had become an expert practitioner. As had happened to Morty and Barbara and Sam, Cassandra's teaching became a recursive cycle of expanding insight and success. At mid-term, scheduling students for fall, she was mixing roughnecks turned-writer from Fun and Fluency into a creative writing section that was no longer hand-picked. And when Creative Writing filled ten minutes after registration began, Cassandra added a second section by eliminating her planning period. Her teaching impressed others besides her students, however; two years later, Cassandra was proclaimed Teacher of the Year by the Georgia NEA.

Cassandra might have become an Expert Practitioner if I had not studied her teaching, for many conditions conducive to change were, or would soon have been, present. In the fall she would have taught Creative Writing back-to-back with the essay course, and the support of university professors and friends would have continued. Writing for Fun and Fluency had been going well, and might have created an upward spiral on its own. Being department coordinator allowed her to add courses from which she was likely to learn. And the Ed.S. project was requiring her to examine her work. For whatever reasons, with peer and professional support, awareness helped Cassandra bridge the paradigm gap. A year later after Cassandra spoke to a Teaching of Writing class, she confirmed her status as an expert practitioner by exclaiming:

Marie, you wouldn't believe what's happening. More and more I'm becoming convinced that everybody can do it, that everyone can learn to write. I don't really think it matters if they're basic or Option I or smart or dumb or rich or poor. I'm just amazed to find that they all can write.

Within a year of adopting the stance, Cassandra had lost all trace of elitism. It was the expert-practitioner pattern; it didn't surprise me at all.

Discussion

The impact of this study is hopeful: it shows that unsuccessful teachers can become effective and identifies some conditions teachers need in order to change. The most obvious conclusion one can draw is that writing experience does not insure successful teaching, for two other factors determine teaching success — the identity model teachers pattern their teaching after and the thoroughness with which they reject composition-paradigm attributes.

It's not possible to judge how well these patterns hold true for teachers who don't see themselves as writers or just how much trouble they would have adopting an expert-practitioner stance. Strategies that seem likely to help all teachers can be identified, however:

1. writing more,
2. examining their own writing experience for implications for teaching,
3. trying approaches suggested by expert-practitioners,
4. observing students closely and listening to what they say about their problems and processes,
5. abandoning any strategy that doesn't work for almost every student,
6. sharing results with colleagues, and
7. supporting each other in change and in resisting composition pressures.

These findings are also hopeful because they validate recent trends in the education of writing teachers — giving teachers varied experiences with writing, engaging expert-practitioners to model instruction in methods courses, enlisting successful teachers to help other teachers improve, looking to experienced writers for information on how writing is done, encouraging teachers to trust what students can teach them about writing and learning, and encouraging mutual support systems to help teachers effect change. The fact that dozens of experienced writers failed to teach successfully, however, suggests the need for teacher educators to consider an additional approach — examining and contrasting the often tacit assumptions underlying the writing and composition assumptions and values that may threaten their success. As happened with schizy writers, recognizing inconsistencies and discarding invalid assumptions might help set frustrated "composition" teachers on an upward path to success.

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NCTE Book Needs Articles

The NCTE Committee on Classroom Practices in Teaching English invites educators at all levels — elementary, secondary, and college — to submit manuscripts for the 1985 Classroom Practices publication, which will focus on the theme "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Improving Our Professional Status." Articles should describe in detail successful strategies for improving one's sense of self; improving student accountability in the classroom; improving relationships with administrators; improving rapport with parents; improving teachers' image in the community; improving teachers' image with legislators.

The intent of the book is to suggest strategies to improve teachers' professional status in relation to one's self-image, one's students, administrators, parents, community, and legislators at both the state and national levels.

Manuscripts can range in length from two to ten pages. Two copies should be submitted, with the author's name and address appearing only on a title page attached to the front of each copy. Manuscripts should be mailed before September 1, 1984, to the Committee Chair:

Jeff Golub
907 S. Plymouth
Olympia, WA 98502 ■

English Teaching Tips

The Michigan Council of Teachers of English has recently published two valuable books for teachers. *Television and Teaching English*, edited by Rhoda Maxwell, contains nine brief articles on how teachers can use TV to teach critical thinking, to motivate, and to teach literature. (40 pages. Cost: \$3.00).

Writing Teachers: What We Say About What We Do, edited by Scott McNabb, collected by Stephen Tchudi, contains fifteen articles for teachers of writing at the secondary and college levels. These articles cover a wide range of topics concerning teaching writing, including the writing curriculum, audience, voice, in-class journals, teaching writing to minority students, ESL students, writing across the curriculum, and several articles on various methods of evaluating writing. The book concludes with a ten page appendix of over 50 classroom tested writing assignments. (176 pages. Cost: \$5.50).

Send orders to MCTE, P.O. Box 892, Rochester, MI 48063. ■

The Jewels Among the Gravel

The teacher's enthusiasm is the number one motivator of writing; the teacher's love for words and literature is contagious. And the open student-teacher relationship is the soil for writing growth. Every student should have the opportunity to write alongside an adult who enjoys the process.

(Farnett, 1975)

Research Design

As noted by Kantor, Kirby, and Goetz (1981), "ethnographic inquiry has traits which make it uniquely suitable to investigation of language teaching and learning." These traits, as they point out, are its concerns with "hypothesis generation and the discovery process, specific features of language contexts, thick description of those phenomena, the roles of participant observer, and the making of meaning." The following study may loosely be labeled "ethnographic," for it involved many of the traits of ethnographic inquiry; however, our data collection involved only 18 hours of class time. The most dominant feature of this study was Professor Ken Kantor and my roles of participant-observers. We were invited by the class instructor to join his high school creative writing class. We participated in the sharing and discussing of the students' compositions and occasionally our own. And, as the following study suggests, we observed and learned much from this writing circle.

Recently, I acted as a participant-observer in a high school writing class where the students had the rare experience of writing alongside their teacher. The teacher was Phil Butler of Crest View High School, and the class was a creative writing class that met twice a week. The students, two juniors and eight seniors, sat around tables in a small conference room of the Learning Resource Center

Robbie W. Strickland completed his doctorate in Language Education and is a communication specialist in the College of Business Administration at the University of Georgia. Phil Butler and all student names in this study are pseudonyms.

and shared, ever so cautiously, their compositions.

The instructor, an aspiring writer of short stories and teacher of eight years, asked the students to write and share one new piece of writing each week. The students were free to choose any topic and to develop that topic in any way, using any genre or structure that they felt comfortable with. The students were later asked to revise one of their compositions and to share the revision with the group as their final exam.

Professor Kantor, associate professor of Language Education at the University of Georgia, and I observed this group and participated in their "Writers' Circle" or "Helping Circle." Ken occasionally read his poetry, and I shared a short story now and then. As participant-observers, we were able to share our writing, our thoughts about writing and to observe what these young writers were saying about writing and the composing process.

My only objectives at the onset of this study were to try to gain some insight into the students' composing processes and to relate any possible implications for more effective teaching. I restricted my aims in accordance with a 1980 statement by my fellow researcher, Kantor: "Sometimes if we limit the goals and objectives of our research, we also limit our visions and 'revisions.' We need to be ready for the nice surprises along the way." (Kantor, 1980).

Sources of Information

As a former teacher of high school and college composition, I began this study with mixed emotions. However, as I began observing and collecting data, my anxiety was soon set to rest. My sources of data were (1) a *writer's questionnaire*, which was given to the students the first week of class; (2) *field notes*, my written observations of each class, a total of 18 hours of observation time; (3) *written products* — each student's first draft and revised draft chosen for the final exam; and (4) *taped interviews* which were conducted at the end of the quarter, after the students had received their final grades.

Each of these sources of data provided valuable information in our attempt to fit together the various facets of each writer. There is much to be learned about writing in school — not just by students, but by those of us who teach and/or theorize about the writing process.

As a participant-observer in this small writing class, I recorded the following activities and patterns about the class.

The instructor always set the atmosphere for the class by talking casually with the students at the beginning of class. He would talk with the class about a recent basketball game, the upcoming school play, an antic of one of his own children, etc. He would then ask for readers. One of the students would usually volunteer, but when the students were reluctant to read, Phil would share one of his own compositions. He would also share his writing process, often explaining how he got and developed the idea for a story and/or how he revised a narrative. At times he would ask for suggestions from the students.

Since research tells us that students sense that what teachers tell them to do is not what they themselves do or what professional writers do, and that they resent this inconsistency (Emig, 1971), I was especially interested in this teacher behavior and the students' reactions to it. During the quarter I noted what others before me had observed (Britton, 1975; Kantor, 1980): as the students came to see their teacher as a fellow writer and trusted adult, they began to realize that their own composing processes were valid and worthy of being cultivated.

As listed in Table 1, some students were more prolific than others, and some were more reluctant to share their compositions.

Most of the shared compositions were first person narratives based on personal experiences. We know that students write best from their own experiences. (Mischel 1974; Beach 1979; Graves 1979; Martin 1979; Planko 1979; Kirby and Liner 1981). The students' choices of topics and genres also tend to confirm what research has told us about highly structured school writing in-

hibiting students' interest, composing processes, and finished products.

There was a definite lack of verbal responses from the students. Many of the responses that were made, even those of the instructor, were of an associative nature. For example, Pete read a narrative about getting into trouble with the teacher. Phil then related a similar experience of receiving a paddling from a grammar school teacher.

TABLE 1
Students' Compositions
and Shared Drafts

Student	Written Compositions	Shared Draft
Karen	9	8
Don	10	8
Lauren	13	14
Melinda	12	15
Dianne	7	7
Leslie	11	10
Leah	11	7
Paul	9	9
Kate	9	9
Pete	14	16

Although I expected more modeling of responses, more consistent attention to the author's craft, I was at the same time reminded that "talk about associations and experiences, while it may appear tangential or irrelevant to objectives, is no less important to the development of writing ability than is direct discussion of technique. Ultimately, it is the qualities of experience that inform and give richness and vitality to writing." (Kantor, 1980).

The teacher's attitude of receptiveness and praise seemed to gradually affect the students' willingness to share and to revise their compositions. The following description of classroom interactions, excerpted from my field notes, illustrates this point:

Observation Sample #1

Observation notes 12/11/81

- I. Melinda reads a short, descriptive piece about ice skating. (The narrative has excellent sensory details; the other students seem to be listening attentively.)

Phil reacts first to Melinda's writing: "I kept thinking of my childhood experiences in the snow, you know, the snowball fights and all that."

No comments from the other students at this point.

- II. Lauren reads a narrative that she has written in diary form. Lauren wrote the entries from her grandmother's point of

view. She later explained that she had researched her family tree and looked through old family letters and photographs to write the story. Lauren's story was filled with lively dialogue and some description of the land the Scottish ancestors were cultivating in Virginia.

Kate responded: "I couldn't understand the time sequence."

Phil interjects: "I think that's because some of the entries could be short, but others need to be developed more, something like a short story. Parts do move too fast."

Ken: "I was looking for an entry right after the wedding."

Lauren: "Yeah, I thought about that but had to finish the project."

- III. Pete reads: (I notice that he seems somewhat nervous at first, but after he gets some response from his audience, he seems to calm down.) The piece is about high school graduation and the "I don't want to graduate blues" — fear of the big world.

Phil gives Pete a publication idea: "Sounds like a good news feature idea to me, Pete."

- IV. Peter nods his head and begins reading a second composition. This narrative is about getting into trouble at school. (Pete seems much more relaxed as he reads his second piece.) He describes Mrs. Seer Sucker, his teacher, as a "monster who resembled a Green Bay Packer."

Phil related a paddling that he got from a similar teacher.

- V. Kate reads a piece about sailing. Apparently, Kate had been working on this piece for some time and had already shared it with her instructor. She made reference to an earlier version.

Phil: "I like it a lot; it works now."

No other students seem to want to read, so I read a poem about my six year old daughter.

Phil: "Yeah, my son read early like that, too. You should keep it and let her read it when she is grown."

Observation Sample #2

Observation notes from 12/18/81

- I. Pete reads first. Before he can begin reading, he makes a lengthy explanation about it. It is a melodrama; he may make it into a cartoon or a musical. He has titled it "Space Pirates." Patrick actually

paraphrased his way through most of this . . . he kept explaining . . . reading very little dialogue.

Tara, a visiting student who occasionally shares poetry with the group, laughs through most of Patrick's lengthy explanation.

Melissa, seems to be listening attentively. The other students, however, seem bored.

Phil reacts to Pete's piece: "I have one suggestion — you need to cut some, especially at the beginning, and you need more focus at the end. Pete, you've got about a four hour movie there, even at Mel Brooks's pace. Your problem is that you've got to cut."

Phil: "Ok, who's next?"

(Dianne has been writing on something since she first came to class. She's just finished writing and is reading over it.)

- II. Lauren: "I'll go next. This is a short story." She says something about childhood memories . . . The short story she reads is entitled "The Fort" and is told from the point of view of an older character looking back at a summer childhood experience.

Phil: "I thought that was descriptive, you didn't?"

Lauren: "Well, I was trying to get the bare facts down first."

Phil: "I liked the movement from the first fort to the A frame. You need one sustained scene, though. Are you going to work on it during the holidays?"

Lauren: "Yeah, I hope to do a lot on it."

- III. Phil asks for readers and Dianne volunteers.

(It seems obvious that Dianne is reading from the draft she has just completed.) The piece is a first person narrative about learning to drive — the piece is humorous — Dianne gets good audience response — lots of laughter as she describes the driving ordeal and her father's fear as she is behind the wheel.

Phil relates his early driving and his mother's reaction. No comments on Dianne's craft as an author.

- IV. Leslie: "I guess I'll read." She reads a narrative about a day at the beach. (Leslie seems self-conscious as she reads; she really rushes through it.)

Pete: "I can really relate to this." He told about a life saving course that he had taken.

Phil: "Leslie's description of drowning seemed so real though; I really thought that happened."

Leslie: "Nope, 'traid not."

- V. Paul reads a narrative about a young, rich banker. In the story, the banker goes through a daily routine, has memories of poor childhood, dying mother — at the end of the day the banker tries to drown his memories in alcohol. (Rich dialogue, fast moving, some flashbacks).

Phil gives Paul a suggestion — he tells Paul that he needs an action to stir up those memories — something needs to happen to the banker to start his thoughts of the past.

Phil encourages Don to read.

- VI. Don: "Oh, you want me to read? Ok." Don reads a humorous narrative about getting into trouble at school. (Don is the sports editor on the school newspaper. Most of his stories are humorous.)

Phil: "Don, do you read a lot of Lewis Grizzard?"

Don: "Oh, yeah."

Phil: "Good, you should."

- VII. Kate reads a composition about an artist who falls in love with the work of art he has just created.

Phil asks Kate if that was her first draft.

Kate: "No."

Phil: "I didn't think so. It seemed finished, polished." However, Phil suggests that Kate give it to a couple of other people to read to see if they can follow it and get the point at the end. He points out to Kate that her voice, intonation, etc. give the emphasis to the right words, but that parts of her composition may be too subtle for the reader.

Phil and some of the students share their composing processes: Phil says something about a draft that he hasn't worked on since last February, but he knows exactly where he stopped with it and exactly where to begin with his next idea. Yet there are other compositions that he has to wait to decide how to end or get ideas to go on with.

Bell rings. Class dismissed.

These observations provide a general picture of the instructor and the total class. However, a case study offers much more.

Emphasizing the potential of case study methodology, Graves (1975) has emphasized:

In a profession where there is a basic commitment to the teaching of the in-

dividual, it is ironic that research devoted to the full study of single individuals is so rare (p.241).

A Case Study: Dianne

From Dianne's questionnaire we learned that she was a high school senior who planned to attend the University of Georgia and major in journalism. Dianne also stated in her questionnaire that she enjoyed writing but admitted that it was hard work. She was editor of the school newspaper last year, and because of this experience she noted that she was most comfortable with transactional writing.

In her open-ended questionnaire Dianne wrote: "I'll tell you one thing — I think writer's block is deadly!" She added that it was easy for her to get inspired, that she gets her ideas from all kinds of sources, but getting her ideas on paper was "something else."

Dianne also revealed several influences on her writing.

My mother (deceased) had a very unique style of writing, a southern style which I like very much. Robert Penn Warren has inspired some of the imagery I use. And I like William Faulkner's descriptions — I think that it builds a solid foundation for a story to have such detail.

Dianne also listed these influences:

I always read things to my dad. Also, I like to read things to Mrs. Henderson (high school newspaper advisor and teacher) and to my best friend because they have opposite styles and I like to have different perspectives.

My own observations of Dianne throughout the quarter painted a picture of a young author somewhat inhibited about sharing her writing but also a picture of a student-writer willing to take risks in order to grow. I often observed Dianne's anxious and intense reactions as Phil and others reacted to her writing.

The first time that Dianne shared one of her compositions was the fifth time that the class met. (Apparently, it had taken her that long to get her courage up to share.) She read a short narrative about learning to drive. In my notes I recorded that Dianne seemed to have the entire group's attention. There were bursts of laughter as she related the driving ordeal. I also noted that rather than responding to Debbie's craft as an author, Phil smiled and described his mother's terror when he first learned to drive.

It was several class meetings later before

Dianne found the courage to share again. This time her composition was a short poem entitled "The Lonely Hunter." It is also important to note that this class session was the first time that Dianne verbally responded to any of the other students' writing.

Melinda, another student, had just read a continuing story about a teenager who was in the hospital when Dianne surprisingly responded, "I understand what you are doing with the doctor, but he seems too unreal, too programmed."

I think that this was a turning point for Dianne. She seemed to take a greater interest in the other students' writing from this point on, and she began writing the "Jillie" piece about this time.

"Jillie" was the composition that Dianne chose to revise for her final exam. We know that students are more likely to revise, and often to great lengths, when they are allowed to choose their own topics (Graves, 1979). We also know that between-draft teacher evaluation encourages revision and produces a better product than guided self-evaluation or no evaluation (Beach, 1979).

The instructor had conferences with each student before the final exam, before the final revision was to be shared. The students chose the composition that they wished to revise and Phil offered advice and specific suggestions for revision.

Ken and I did not sit in on the student conferences. We felt that they should be individual and private, between the student and teacher. However, we did conduct a two-hour interview at the end of the quarter with the instructor and asked several questions about these student conferences.

Phil explained that he tried to focus on each student's strengths as a writer. He pointed out the progress that each student had made during the quarter and made specific suggestions for revising their selected compositions which were to be read as their final exam.

In discussing these final compositions, Phil explained that he tried to follow these guidelines for discussing creative products:

1. To give genuine praise;
2. To ask questions for clarification (Parts of the writing may need clarification; also, you're asking the student to think.);
3. To give constructive criticism, being as specific as possible;
4. To amplify — to give valid suggestions for furthering the work (and in this case, for possibly publishing the work.)

(Note: These guidelines, suggested in no

specific order, are based on the guidelines and objectives presented by Edward deBono in *Lateral Thinking*, New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

Although I have not analyzed in great depth Dianne's revisions, it is apparent that much work went into the writing and rewriting of this short story. After reading over both drafts, I noted the following revisions: In Dianne's second draft, she described the setting more at the beginning of the story; she also introduced her second character much sooner. Her organization is much better in the second draft, and the dialogue is easier to follow.

Dianne's final interview was perhaps the most revealing of all the sources of information. She commented at length about how she approached the writing and revising of "Jillie," explaining how she wrote the first draft, and had several people read it and then react to it. Dianne also explained that she finally had to come back to this story later in the quarter in order to be more objective about it. She said that she now appreciates the revising process and concluded with "It works!"

Teachers can encourage revision through an accepting attitude and guidance during the composing process. Dianne's case illustrates this point. Her comments also indicate the growth of a writer who now has a new view on the writing process.

Many students have vague concepts of revision. Most see it as Dianne saw it earlier, not as a process but as a last step (Sommers, 1979). Some think it means rewording, being careful not to repeat words (Sommers, 1979). Some copy over for neatness's sake (Pianko, 1979), while still others "flower up" their work (Mischel, 1974).

In her final interview Dianne also pointed out that she finds that she is now more observant — "I notice things a lot more than I used to, and I'm always taking notes; just about everywhere I go, I'll jot things down on little slips of paper."

Dianne summed up her and others' reluctance to read, to share their compositions: "If you're reading something you wrote, it is a lot harder than reading any old thing!"

I chose Dianne to focus on as a case study not because she was the best writer in this class. (Indeed, Dianne was not the best writer in this class.) Rather, I chose her case study to record the growth of a writer. And after observing this writing class and this student in particular, I would like to offer the following implications for teaching.

Implications for Teaching

1. The valve that opens fluent, effective communication is an environment where students can risk exposing their lives, where the act of telling and sharing what one is really feeling and thinking is treated with utmost respect.

2. Creative talking can be a stimulus to creative writing. If students can communicate orally, teachers can use that communication to convince them that they do have something to write. Also, students should be encouraged to play with language.

3. Writing isn't taught by saying "Write . . .", then grading what students already know how to do. Writing is taught by suggesting challenging directions, presenting patterns and providing examples that open doors to original thinking and expressing.

4. The constant reading and sharing of writing — with consistent attention drawn to the writer's techniques and effective means of expression brings students gradually to a sense of what constitutes good writing.

5. Nothing replaces writing together. Because it eases the pain, helps students grow and benefit from one another's thinking, allows them to SEE the process at work and keeps morale high, it is well worth the time and effort that it takes to work through the process together (not all the time but often).

6. The tools of writing are not the writing. The mechanical tools are necessary for effective writing, but, by themselves, do not communicate. The message is of primary importance; the structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation are the tools to make the message clear.

7. It is the teacher's job to help the writer during the composing process — to guide the young writer in order to help him or her develop the best work possible — to give aid while the composition is in unfinished form, not to judge it as a finished product.

I never noticed Phil Butler criticizing a student's writing. He praised the good aspects of a student's composition; he found, as Professor Kantor put it, "the jewels among the gravel." All of the students related to this point in their interviews. In the words of Don, for example, "Mr. Butler was different; he would mark what you did right!"

Graves (1981) has pointed out that ethnographic research has the potential to be accessible to teachers. He states that teachers have largely rejected research findings because the "faceless" data do not match with the real

faces of their students and their behavior in classroom contexts.

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Book Review

Brannon, Lil, Knight, Melinda and Neverow Turk, *Writers Writing*. New Jersey: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1982

Writers Writing, authors Lil Brannon, Melinda Knight and Vara Neverow Turk claim, is not a composition textbook, but rather a "context" book. Indeed, the book is different from what most teachers and students have probably come to expect from composition texts. No discussions of the modes of discourse, no skills or drills exercises are among its nine chapters. Instead of prescriptions and directives, *Writers Writing* offers its readers a look at writing in progress in order to dramatize how writing is made.

The authors' purpose is to help students understand composing by letting them trace the paths particular pieces of writing follow as they evolve, including the false starts, the dead ends, breakthroughs and rearrangements writers often grapple with in the process of making meaning. The kinds of decisions and choices writers make, and the impact they have on drafts in progress, are discussed within the context of the sample texts the authors present. Examining writing choices and decisions and their effects on subsequent drafts helps students learn that deciding *how* to say it is as important as deciding *what* to say in writing. The authors offer students strategies for making their own decisions and for weighing the differences that options for "how to say" make in their own drafts. This decision making approach to composing certainly has more generative power than some of the more formulaic approaches many composition texts offer. The strategies Brannon, et. al. present, unlike formulae for writing the five paragraph essay, are ones students can adapt to new writing situations, new purposes and new audiences outside of the Freshman Composition classroom.

Readers may find that one of the most useful chapters of *Writers Writing* is the sixth, "Becoming Your Own Reader." Donald

Murray has often argued for the importance of developing in students a critical sense, another self, to help them evaluate their own writing. For writers to gain authority, to make decisions about what and how to revise, this critical other self must be developed. Brannon, Knight and Neverow Turk offer a technique aimed at helping students develop their critical sensibilities. They show students how, by becoming their own readers, they can weigh their intentions against their written productions in order to judge whether they have said what they meant to say. Students can learn how to locate dissonance between intention and production, and in this way can make decisions about revising their drafts. Other helpful discussions in the book include an explanation of how students can use writing as a tool for discovering what they want to say, and how they can capitalize on the feedback experienced readers give in response to their writing.

Yet for all its claims about being a "context" book, much of *Writers Writing* focuses attention away from the real context of any composition class — the writing students in our own classes are producing. Many of the "interactions," suggestions for discussion or writing that the authors offer, ask students to analyze or evaluate the sample texts the book presents. Students could perhaps spend their time more productively examining their own work and that of their peers. In their defense, I should say that the authors do encourage readers to consider their own drafts. Teachers may want to consider, however, how useful or necessary interacting with the book's sample texts is for their students. Anyone who decides to adopt *Writers Writing* as a composition text will want to take care that the context for their course does not shift from the writing their students are producing to the context *Writers Writing* supplies. ■

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